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Flora Morant
Brookhouse Park





Thos. Morant

EIGHTEEN YEARS

ON THE

SANDRINGHAM ESTATE;

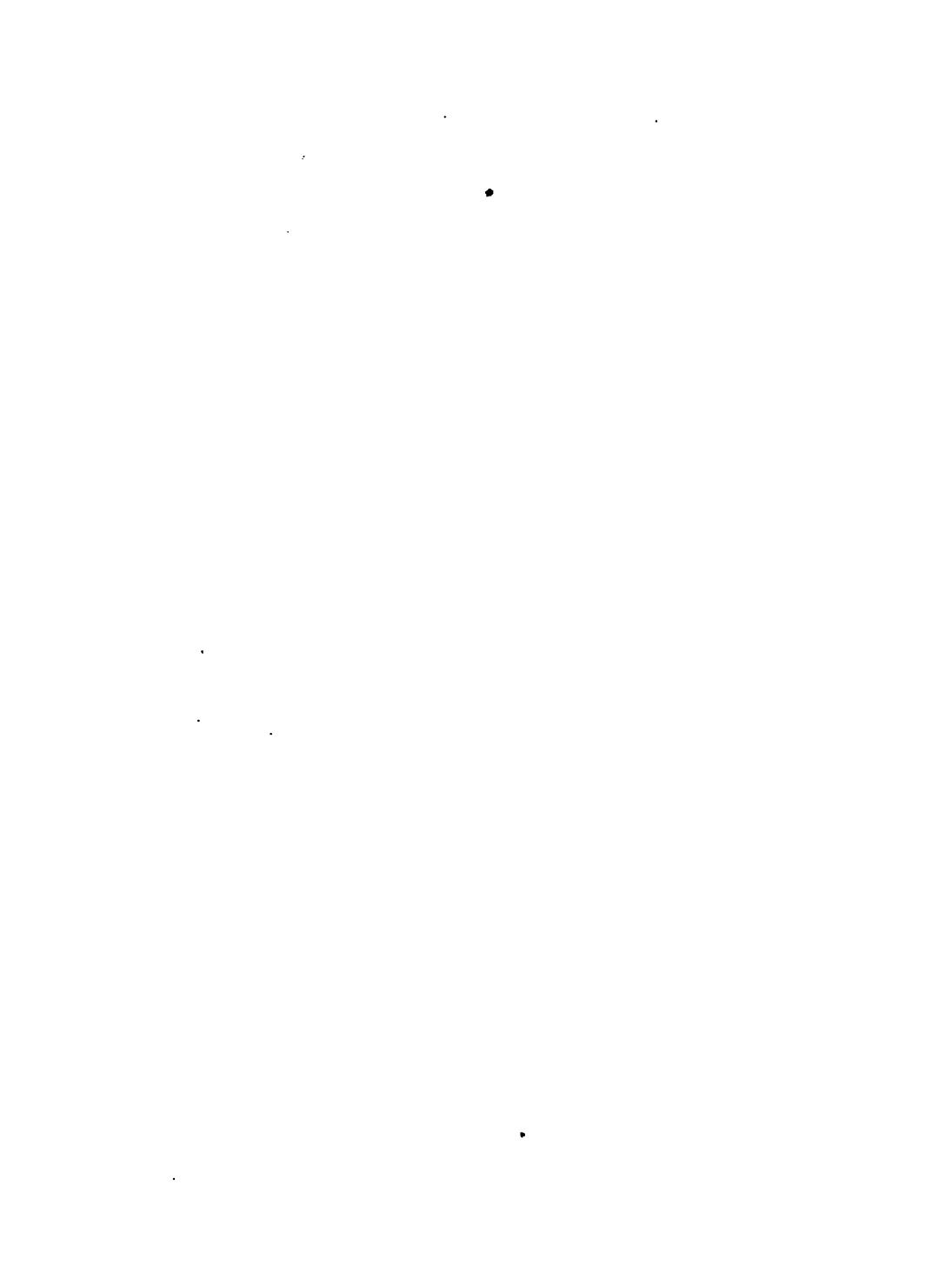
BY

"THE LADY FARMER."

1888

London :

THE TEMPLE COMPANY,
6 BOOKSELLERS' ROW, STRAND, W.C.



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EIGHTEEN YEARS ON THE SANDRINGHAM ESTATE.

CHAPTER I.

OUR FIRST HOME.

TO those whose experiences are limited to this democratic stage of the nineteenth century, when lords of high degree are embarking in every description of shop keeping under the euphemistic title of joint stock companies ; when dukes' sons are to be found in merchants' offices, and cotton lords and successful speculators who have invested in landed estates are no longer ostracised and flouted by the squirearchy as if they belonged to the criminal class, but welcomed as a positive boon to worn-out and poverty-

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stricken neighbourhoods,—it may seem strange that little more than twenty years ago a lingering superstition existed in the rural districts that very few trades and professions were befitting the younger sons and relations of the country gentry, and that any who ventured out of the groove were spoken of in apologetic tones by the rest of the family, accompanied by expressions of bewilderment and bewonderment at what the world was coming to.

Agriculture, which would appear to be the natural occupation for the country-born and bred, was seldom resorted to. The squire might farm his own lands, but upon the mysterious principle that “you may be genteel and brew, but can’t be genteel and bake,” to be a tenant upon another man’s property was quite another matter, and of the few who made the attempt I never heard of one who succeeded. Everything was against them, both socially and financially. The *bona-fide* farmers possessed an entire monopoly of the hired lands, which they guarded with jealous exclusiveness, considering the competition among themselves quite keen enough without the addition of interlopers ; and as there were no agricultural colleges or any means of instruction beyond what could be picked up from those engaged in the pursuit, I am afraid the needful information was not only withheld, but also the unlucky individual often led astray ; and what with being taken in by dealers and salesmen,

tricked and pilfered by labourers, misfortunes of mysterious origin happening in all directions, and treated as a spy and intruder by the whole fraternity, his disappearance from the scene was only a question of time, and served as another illustration of the general opinion, that gentlemen never did or would succeed in farming.

Notwithstanding these dismal precedents, upon an engagement to a younger member of one of those old historic families still to be found near the Scottish Borders, who have possessed the same estates and called them after their own names from such remote antiquity, that it would not be surprising if they were one day honoured with a special Act of Parliament for the purpose of dividing their inheritance among their retainers, upon the grounds that they have enjoyed them quite long enough, we felt that with our love of horses, dogs, sport and country life in all its branches, any other existence would be quite unendurable, and not choosing to vegetate upon an inconveniently small income, or sink into that most abject position, the family poor relation and pauper, and hoping that we might prove an exception to the rule of failures, we decided to make farming our future calling and state in life.

And before the advent of ground game, strikes, American competition, depressions, and other plagues of Egypt, I cannot conceive a more pleasant existence

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for those who would make up their minds to work and roughnesses. There was so much freedom, cheeriness and breadth about it, with an almost patriarchal exemption from the usual burdens of civilisation, and an Arcadian simplicity about the weekly bills ; whilst your horses could be kept at cost price, and the rent, rates and taxes included in the land arrangements, you escaped many of those harassing visitations that other mortals have to endure. Above all, there was the overwhelming attraction of husband and wife being able to work together, each taking their own speciality with a mutual interest in the whole concern.

I began my new life under what novelists call the happiest auspices. My husband had been living for some time on a small farm in the neighbourhood, in order to gain some experience before removing to a larger one. The hall and park went with it ; it was, in fact, the dower-house of the family to whom it belonged, and was let with the home-farm in the absence of the owner. It was a nice old place, with comfortable low-ceilinged rooms and wainscot, and a Swiss dairy with painted windows and Dutch tiles opening into the garden. The farmyard was near enough for going in and out, and everything unsightly hidden by shrubs and trees ; and when we had unpacked the cases and arranged the rooms it looked very liveable, and our life there is something to look back upon to the

end of one's days ; for I cannot agree with our great modern poet, "That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things ;" but, on the contrary, believe that the remembrance helps us to endure long after years of loneliness and waiting.

Housekeeping was the only annoyance, I not having had the opportunity of learning management on a small scale, which is much more troublesome than a larger one. A "trousseau" too might have been dispensed with, and I should have preferred the money instead to spend in a more congenial manner; it takes up so much room and becomes old-fashioned before it is half worn out. Then the plate ought to have been in the hands of an experienced butler, and the china in the charge of a staid housemaid. It was rather trying sometimes to have bent spoons and a bruised tea-pot, and to hear an occasional crash of our treasures in the dim distance ; and although our things had been given by friends and were not a foolish investment on our part, less refinement in our surroundings would have given less anxiety and more real comfort.

I should have had no objection upon social grounds to have cleaned the plate and washed and dusted the china myself, not recognising the word "menial," or thinking anything beneath anyone who has the strength to do it ; but then I could not have been so much out of doors with my husband, for he did not

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like to ride, farm, or break-in young horses without me, while I very much preferred those occupations, so that housekeeping became rather a secondary consideration. The cook was my scourge. She was an obliging, pleasant-looking young woman, and no fault could be found with the dinners, for she had a genius for the art, and everything was well done and nicely sent up ; but having been kitchenmaid in an extravagant place, she had imbibed a supreme contempt for economy, and looked down upon me as a screw if I made any suggestions as to expenditure ; and when I cut down an excess in one direction, it was sure to crop up in another ; for having made up her mind that there should be a certain amount of consumption in the house, to that she stuck with a persistency worthy of a better cause.

The lady's maid was another mistake ; but it did not occur to me to break off old habits all at once, and she behaved very well, considering the change it must have been to her, and how greatly she must have missed the society of a housekeeper's room. At first she offended my country damsels by "keeping herself to herself," but the dignity of solitude becoming unbearable, she at last condescended to fraternise with them, which also had its drawbacks, for she made them up some bonnets in the last London fashions, which did not penetrate into the rural districts so rapidly as at present, and were considered an unbe-

coming liberty if worn by any of the lower classes. The effect in our country church was startling in the extreme, and I constantly expected a remonstrance from the vicar for setting so bad an example. It also gave them a general uplifting of ideas and deportment, and I felt guilty of having introduced both snobbishness and frivolity upon an unsophisticated state of society. Then the "boy" grew tired of being ordered about by the maids, and took to truant habits and village acquaintances according to the custom of his kind, and if sent on an errand or to the post, would not reappear for hours afterwards.

My only protection under these perplexities was the chronic feud existing between my domestics and Mrs Rumbles, the farm bailiff's wife, who lived in a cottage close by, and considered it her duty to criticise our establishment and expenses, both from fidelity to our interests and the pleasure she derived in pouncing upon and exposing our delinquencies. I kept out of her way when I first came, for she looked as if she thought me a useless fine lady, and that I and my maid were likely to make serious inroads upon the profits of the farm without any corresponding advantage; but as she and her husband were very faithful and honest, I did not want the old woman to be worried when there was no occasion for it. I satisfied her by explaining that I had not come quite empty-handed, and that my private allowance would more

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than make up for the invasion. We afterwards became very good friends, for besides her trustworthiness, she had plenty of common sense, with a good deal of homely wit, and very kind-hearted in spite of her sharp tongue.

Matters at last came to a crisis. Mrs Rumbles waylaid me one morning boiling over with rage. "Come this way, if you please, ma'am, and see how 'they' have treated my donkey." ("They" being the only epithet by which she deigned to recognise my ill-conditioned menage.) The poor thing had been shamefully spurred, and I was as angry as herself, cruelty to animals and children always rousing me to wrath. Upon inquiry, it seemed that there had not been meat enough left for the servants' supper the evening before ; and instead of contenting themselves with eggs and bacon or bread and cheese, they had ordered the boy to go to the nearest town for a leg of mutton ; and he not choosing to walk, had abstracted the donkey and an old spur, that he found about the place, and galloped there and back again with the mutton like a trooper.

After that, I set vigorously to work myself, and though I may not have become a proficient in the art, there were, at all events, no more donkey excursions of that description. My reforms also received a powerful impetus in the arrival of an elderly relative with her confidential maid to spend the day, and set us all to

rights ; and, like a couple of social detectives, they soon spotted both delinquencies and delinquents, and without condescending to ask my leave, proceeded to harangue them all round according to the nature and extent of their respective offences, the " boy " in particular being threatened with parental wrath, and a dismal future of terrors (I am not sure that the gallows were not hinted at as the last page of his destiny), and he cried and rubbed his eyes until he was not fit to be seen. The only event that marred the dignity of these magisterial proceedings was the extraordinary behaviour of their own servant whom they had brought with them. Our worthy kinswoman had inherited strong philanthropic tendencies from her Quaker ancestry, and among other erratic schemes for the regeneration of the human species, had introduced a thoroughbred gipsy boy into her household, and undertaken to cure him of the habits and instincts of his race, and up to that time had been justly proud of her success. What induced him to break out on this occasion I cannot think, unless it were that our hodge-podge ways revived the recollections of his youth and propelled him to set off steeple-chasing, and careering across country regardless of time and space ; and I never expected that he would be either seen or heard of again in domestic life. After keeping the carriage waiting for hours, he turned up at last, and then the injured lady expended

her well-known gifts of oratory upon the culprit, with ourselves and the steward as audience, we in suppressed fits, and old Rumbles in grim delight, and an “Ah! he’s a-catchin’ it now.” Everything quieted down in time; our guests departed in peace with their *protégé* considerably subdued by the sequel to the day’s adventures, and we were left not wholly inconsolable at this little illustration, that accidents would occasionally happen even in the best regulated families.

Other callers, but of a less disturbing nature, also began to arrive, and we had all the society that the neighbourhood afforded, country places being pretty much alike in that respect; and I had the opportunity of airing my trousseau gowns at the balls, or in paying wedding visits; for the farm being so small we had time for a few outings, and either rode to our friends’ houses, sending the luggage round, or if we went with the brougham that had been given us, putting the man and maid inside and driving on the box ourselves, rattling our cobs along, stopping to gossip with every description of acquaintance, calling out to the cattle-salesmen to look us up on their rounds, and doing a little horse-dealing as the opportunity occurred, for we could only afford to keep the stables up by breaking in and selling out again.

Sometimes we had “staying company,” taking care to have people who did not mind our ways, or liked

them for a change. Even the family dandy condescended to enjoy himself, with the exception of one unlucky little *contre-temps* on a Sunday morning, when his airy and unexceptionable get-up always reminded me of Rotten Row on a hot summer's day.

With an amiable and well-bred desire to please, he followed the others into the farmyard, where it was allowable to look round and see that all was right even on the Day of Rest. Why the huge maternal pig, hitherto only noticeable for peaceable behaviour and enormous litters, which my brothers-in-law declared was the only thing that kept us going, should have singled him out for attack, was as unaccountable as the revival of nomadic habits in the gipsy boy ; but it really seemed as if everything about the place conspired to make a raid upon the habits and customs of society and civilisation ; for no sooner did he appear in sight, than she rushed between his legs, carried him off and upset him into the black and greasy oozings of a "muck heap."

Everyone was very sorry, but it could not be helped, and apologies would have been worse than useless, and might have led to seriously explosive results. There are tragic moments in every mortal life that are beyond the reach of sympathy, and where silence is the only refuge, and I cannot recollect upon this or any subsequent occasion the most distant allusion

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being made to the event ; whilst it was remarkable that, from that day forth, he ceased to take the slightest interest in our professional pursuits, and never again volunteered to accompany us when engaged thereupon.

CHAPTER II.

MIGRATION.

THE time soon came when we were to leave Sedgeford and go to this large farm at Sandringham. I had not been there long enough to take root or contract the intense home feeling that women feel so much more strongly than men; but we were happy and flourishing, and the idea of a change threw a shadow before it, and a presentiment that it would be better to remain as we were, and not risk a certainty for an uncertainty, for if we made but little we lost less. It was a case of being over-ruled and over-persuaded, and it was especially urged upon me that if I influenced my husband in the matter, I should afterwards repent of having kept him in a narrow way of life, without enough to do, and no opportunity of developing his energies. If it had not been for the forebodings of trouble to come, which are not always the result of superstition, and in our case only too painfully realised, the prospect seemed a desirable one. It was extremely difficult to get a farm at that

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time, and a vacancy of rare occurrence, and it was very kind of the owner of Sandringham to offer us one on his estate, when he was overwhelmed with applications for it ; and had it still belonged to him when we migrated there, it might have altered our views as to the prudence of the undertaking ; but, to our very great regret, it was suddenly sold to the Prince of Wales, and, with all due deference to Royalty, we could not expect it to be as pleasant as when in possession of private friends, who would have taken an interest in all that concerned us, whilst business arrangements might or might not be conducted in a satisfactory manner.

Sandringham itself was a most attractive place, a little bit of Scotland, with heather and pines dropped down upon the Norfolk marshes and flats, and more picturesque in those days, and suggestive of the old race of squires who had held it from time to time than at present, when the extensive building has given it more of a suburban air ; and a sort of romance was attached to the owner, who resided principally abroad, and introduced an agreeable foreign element upon his occasional visits, and his subsequent marriage with the Lady Harriette D'Orsay added to the interest.

If her peculiar trials had not become a matter of society history, I should not venture to allude to them here. Why sorrow and sin should have been sent to

one born to the gifts of rank, wealth, and marvellous beauty, is a mystery that we cannot attempt to penetrate. To those who heard from her own lips the sad story of her life, and the terrible cruelty of her early wrongs, it was impossible not to feel the injustice which she never seemed to feel for herself, that the authors of her misery should have been courted and idolised to the last, leaving her to repent in sackcloth and ashes. Public opinion has now strangely altered with respect to the breach of the Seventh Commandment; a wave of vice and impurity, inaugurated in high places, has swept over the length and breadth of the land; modesty has departed from among us, decency is making haste to follow, shame and repentance are unknown, or deemed obsolete and fanatical; but I do not think that any fashion or opinion would have altered her views, or drawn her from the narrow and thorny path that she deliberately chose to follow; courting every humiliation, esteeming all others better than herself, adopting the severe and narrow doctrines of a school of religion that must have been peculiarly distasteful to an impulsive, artistic temperament, and spending her time in good works, not solely in a selfish spirit of expiation, but in the hope of making other lives better and happier than her own. I never saw her again after she left Sandringham, but was glad to hear of her death in Paris a few years afterwards, and to feel that she had at last gone to her

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rest, and that her sins would be forgiven, for she suffered much.

We had not yet seen our future home, and I was all anxiety to know what it was like, and, having obtained permission from the farmers who had not yet vacated it, one day we set off. It had been very difficult to obtain any information about it, and all I could pick up from any stray country folks who had chanced to have been there, was, that it "were a mucky hole," and a "downfally place, and not fit to live in," so that I was not prepared for much, but my imagination had not stretched to the scene of dirt, ruin and desolation that greeted us.

Appleton (the name of the place) had known better days, and even distinction, as the last stronghold of the Pastons, and a grand moated hall had formerly stood there, with chapel and priests' rooms, and all the romantic accessories of an old English Roman Catholic family ; but, with the fatality that seems to pursue an ancient race when obliteration has once begun its ruthless course, it had been burned down nearly a century before ; a large rambling house had been roughly built amongst the ruins ; the family quitted it for ever, and it was afterwards sold, and added on to the Sandringham estate.

We found it tenanted by two queer old bachelors, who had made heaps of money in the days of low rents, cheap labour and war prices, which was of no

earthly use to them beyond the satisfaction of feeling that it was safely stowed away to increase and multiply ; and we could not help thinking how much better bestowed it would have been upon us who had such a very good idea of how to spend and enjoy it. The gifts of fortune are, and always have been, dispensed in an unsatisfactory manner, at least, in the opinion of those who are not among the favoured few. They received us with every kindness and hospitality, met us at the door, got up some wine, and a woman was told off to show me round the house, and I could not but be gratified at the compliment they afterwards paid us, of putting every room through the unusual process of a soap and water scrubbing, excusing themselves to a neighbour for this departure from their cherished habits, on the score of gallantry to a lady, and general politeness to the new comers.

A further inspection before coming into residence did not remove our first impressions ; room after room opened almost out of doors ; I think there were nine separate entrances ; nearly all the floors were of brick, and in one large, dreary den, a spring of water soaked up through the crevices ; not a window or door fitted or shut properly, and the complimentary cleaning had not frightened off the bugs, which swarmed in clusters ; whilst the rats, after frisking about the house, swam round and round the dairy

milk leads for a change. Everything down below looked so suggestive of fever and rheumatism, that we gave it up to the packing cases, and, finding a set of rooms upstairs that looked rather more promising, and having first disposed of the bugs and rats by the usual methods, we fitted them up with part of the furniture, and with large fires they began to look tolerably comfortable, and had the advantage of plenty of space, which I always prefer, however ramshackle it may be, to square cramped-up pokiness in good repair, and it did not matter so much for us who lived out of doors and were not so very particular about appearances.

The farm buildings were in keeping with the house, and I need say no more. The old men had been model tenants in one respect, for they never asked for repairs, and objected to anything that had tumbled down being built up again. The roads had not been mended for years, and were an inverted process, sinking down in the middle and high at the sides, and round the premises was a sea of mud and slush which increased as the rain set in, and I could only get about by probing the ground with an alpenstock, and jumping from one footing to another. The land was much exhausted, and appeared to have been neither properly manured nor weeded for years, whilst broken gates and miles of rotten fencing completed the list of dilapidations.

The Rumbles had come with us, after going through the preamble of first they would, and they wouldn't, and then talked of taking a little place of their own, and of course ended by coming after all, and were quartered for the present in a sort of half bathing-machine, half shepherd's house on wheels, anchored in the above-mentioned sea of slush, and I wonder some of the village wags did not pay the old lady out by trundling them off in the night. She put up with the inconvenience better than I expected ; the extended sphere for her energies in having more people to scold making up for home discomforts ; and as Rumbles always had to follow her lead, for whilst rating him soundly for being too "easy-goin'" with the men, she never objected to that weakness when exercised towards herself, I was spared all grumbling and complaints.

I need not say that our indoor servants, who had migrated with us, speedily gave notice to quit ; with no suitable society and such outlandish environments, nothing else could be expected of them ; the cook in particular announcing that she should be injuring her prospects in life by remaining with me. We filled up their places in a tolerably satisfactory manner, with the occasional assistance of an antediluvian from the village, and a boy from the farm, who had been accustomed to the dreadful old-fashioned floggings, and yelled dismally over his first breakage, thinking we

should inflict the same description of punishment, for “Maaster William” (one of the old men) “did use to lay on to ‘em.”

For visitors and visiting we had not much time, and unless they rode over to call, I almost preferred their staying away; for some fatality generally led the “carriage company” up a lower road that looked the nearest and best, but was full of treacherous holes and overgrown with grass; and it was so alarming to see signals of distress in the distance, coachmen and footmen descending from the box, and the occupants from inside, like the unloading of a ship in a storm, and knowing they would arrive muddy and flustered, with jaded steeds and damaged springs, and hardly able to recover their composure before it was time to depart, and would have to be pioneered back until they reached *terra firma*.

The first thing we did in the way of out-of-door improvement was to make a road passable for man and beast, and save the wear and tear of horses and carts, and then to insure a daily delivery of letters to the village, instead of a two days’ post from the county town only eight miles off; and having thus established a little intercourse with the outer world, we set to work to get the land in order; but the amount it would cost, and the time it would take to complete the task, was frightful to contemplate. It is very easy to run a farm out, but it may possibly be some years before

you can get it into "heart" again, and dependable for produce in average seasons. There were, however, good makings about the place; it was capable of being worked up into an excellent light land farm, and there was a charming site for a new house; for whilst making the best of present circumstances, we should have had no objection to an improvement, and it was a favourite amusement to sketch out some future paradise, but with little hope that our visions would be realised; when matters took an unexpected turn in the arrival of her Majesty's delightful old land-steward from Osborne on a tour of inspection, whose *esprit de corps* being thoroughly roused at finding such an eyesore upon a Royal domain, and his keen professional eye quite appreciating what we had already done on the land, he made such vigorous representations at headquarters, that orders were speedily given for the entire demolition of everything as it stood, and the erection of a house and model buildings corresponding as nearly as possible with the plans we had drawn up.

Before the pulling down began, we were honoured with a visit from our young Royal landlord, then on the eve of his marriage with the Princess Alexandra of Denmark. The former owner had been so good as to name us to His Royal Highness, who was vastly amused with our queer quarters, and after looking all round, raced up the ladder of a staircase to see the

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rooms we had fitted up above, and I need not say how attracted we were with his extraordinary charm of manner and power of putting everyone at their ease, whether they might be driving a donkey cart or cleaning a grate, without a suggestion of patronage or difference of rank, which has since attained a world-wide reputation, and exercises so powerful a spell over the British nation, whilst his evident liking for my husband and subsequent hospitality to him, will always be pleasing remembrances.

We moved into the new house as soon as the building was sufficiently advanced, and the pleasure of seeing the old obstructions removed and our home rise in its place even exceeded our expectations; and whether it be from associations, or that the place you have planned and created yourself will be dearer to you than any other, it has always seemed to me the most attractive on earth, and never to be forgotten or replaced.

The rooms on one side were all brightness and sunshine, looking over the Sandringham heath, and woods of cathedral-like pines, through which a blaze of glory penetrated when the sun set into the sea beyond; and on the other, over the farm premises, which promised to be worthy of a Royal estate, and our animals to be as well housed as ourselves.

By the earnest and touching request of the noble lady, the last scion of the illustrious Paston race, we

carefully preserved every relic that had escaped the desecration that proceeded us—the old nut walk and entrances to underground passages,—the ruined church and ancestral vault,—the sycamore trees by the Pilgrim's Well, perhaps sown originally by those very pilgrims who made Appleton a halting-place on their way to the celebrated shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, guided there along the “pedlars' road” by the light of the Milky Way, with other historical associations, which greatly delighted the soul of “Charles Kingsley,” who, with Mrs Kingsley and his son and daughter, came and spent a long day with us, and ferreted out Roman, Danish, Saxon and Norman remains, with old stones of wondrous meanings, but was not above leaving his antiquarian researches to look through our live stock, including the nursery department, and showed a keen eye for the points of a horse, or anything else in “fish, flesh, or fowl” that met his fancy, to be reproduced under the marvellous light that genius throws upon all that it touches.

CHAPTER III.

ALONE.

Is it true that those who have a capacity for appreciating happiness, knowing when they are happy and thankful for it, are seldom permitted to enjoy it for long? Are some destined to go through life in the perpetual sunshine of prosperity, whilst to others a large measure of sorrow is meted out, until they are almost afraid to enjoy or care for anything, and wonder what they can have done to deserve such chastisement, and trying in vain to believe that it is sent in Mercy and Love? We do not know, we cannot tell; I suppose we all have as much happiness as we deserve and that is good for us. And as years pass by and the first sharp grief is over, and we draw nearer to the time of reunion, we sometimes reason with ourselves, whether, supposing it were possible to choose our own destiny, we would have willed it otherwise; or, if the prosperity we should have planned for ourselves would have brought the peculiar blessing that has run through so much of our pain, or that we could have wished

those who have gone before in faith and fear to have remained with us, subject to the same trials and infirmities, and the possibility that they might change towards us, or we towards them.

It was long before we could realise when the future seemed so bright and all our wishes fulfilled, that we were not to share it together. He bore it bravely, as became one of Kingsley's "Englishmen," glad and willing to live, but not afraid to die. Our little daughter had gone before, and I and the boy were left alone.

And now that the brightness of my life had passed away, the only future that seemed endurable was to remain in our home and carry out all our plans. Unless it proved to be a positive necessity, I really could not go. It is all very well to be told the wide world is all before you ; the wide world seemed to me to be a very dreary place, and I shrank from going out into it. The house was not to be let apart from the farm, and if it had, I should not have cared so much to remain ; it was the occupation that I wanted, the sheer hard work as an opiate and distraction. If it had not been for the child, I think I should have gone into training in some London hospital, so great was the need of an all-absorbing employment.

The opposition encountered when I first expressed myself willing and capable of undertaking the

management of nearly nine hundred acres of land, twelve or thirteen hundred head of live stock, a large staff of labourers and other addenda, could hardly be considered unreasonable. It seemed a desperate attempt for a woman, and every possible argument was brought to bear against it, from the usual army of croakers to the opinion of disinterested friends, no one being more energetic in their protests than "Charles Kingsley," who was staying with the Prince at the time, and came down with his usual impetuosity to beg me not to think of such a thing. I can see him now, dressed like a scarecrow, stammering more than ever from nervousness, using no hackneyed words of consolation, but so sorry for me, and hardly able to say anything but "My d-dear lady, p-pray don't, you'll r-ruin yourself," and rushing off again, hardly waiting to say good-bye, as if he could not stand it any longer. I think he tried to explain that some relations of his own had lost a considerable sum of money in farming that he would have inherited, and I could well understand that any of his race might be credited with a large amount of wide-hearted generosity, but not with the wisdom of their generation, so that, from a practical point of view, his kindly warnings did not alter my determination. In after years he admitted he had been mistaken ; and had I continued to lead a woman's every-day sort of life, I should certainly

have very soon come to grief, but I resolved from the first to give up all society, to lead, as Robinson Crusoe, an existence as if I had emigrated to the backwoods, to be wholly engrossed with my work, and do and think of little else from morning till night.

I do not pretend to say that I was able to get on at first without some professional assistance, and shall not forget the way in which some of the neighbouring farmers came forward and offered their services. My husband had been so popular throughout the country side, that every one seemed willing to help me for his sake, and to that I am indebted for any success I may have had. Foremost among my new champions was one Mr Broome, who farmed an estate of his own, besides a large extent of hired land, and was noted for his agricultural successes. My husband had been with him in former days to learn farming, and, when yielding to my intense wish, he made arrangements for me to remain at Appleton, he desired me to apply to him in any business difficulty, knowing that he would always assist me with his advice and experience. If the dying are gifted with peculiar foresight as to who will befriend those who are their last thoughts on earth, I can answer for the fidelity with which this trust was fulfilled. I was quite ashamed of the trouble I was obliged to give him, when he had so much business of his own, but the answer was always the same, "No thanks, it is a

pleasure ; as I say to my wife, when I'm no use to anybody I'm best under the sod." I was principally indebted to him for being allowed to remain ; he was so sure I could manage it, guaranteeing his own personal superintendence, that every objection was finally removed, and I was experimentally installed in the new position of lady-farmer.

To secure an efficient steward was an all-important point, and I was grieved to find that poor old Rumbles was not considered quite equal to the undertaking. His energetic wife had died the year before, entrusting me with the responsible office of choosing a "steady, respectable person" as her successor. I fulfilled her wishes as far as those qualities were concerned, and found him an excellent woman, who, having outlived the age of romance, if it had ever existed, came to stay for a month on trial to see if they were likely to "sute" and things to be "pleasant and comfortable," and then they were married. But she had not the agricultural gifts of her predecessor ; the bent of her mind was of a purely domestic nature, so there was not the same partnership of work and interest out-of-doors, and perhaps the whole thing might have been too much for the old man ; but yet it was against my judgment to send him away, for, independently of any private feeling, he was very "knowledgable" about land and crops, which is not to be learnt in a day, and his honesty would be difficult to replace.

I hardly knew how to break the news to him, for he had made up his mind that it was his duty to stay and take care of me, and that I should go to ruin without him, and he was so proud and important in the new responsibility, consulting me about everything, and how I should like this and that, and would I come round and see if some “job of work were done to my mind ;” and when he came up in the evening for orders, I could keep him talking a little about the past and present in a way that you can do with old servants, who seem to care and remember more than other people. At last I managed to tell him, and he behaved like a real old gentleman ; “ knowed it warn’t my doings, and what would Maaster have said, and he’d go on just the same and do the best he could for me to the last.” And he kept his word, and showed the new man everything about the place, and tried to make the change as smooth and comfortable as possible, though he told me afterwards “ he see’d from the fust what sort of a chap he were, though he never said nothing to no one,” “ only I says to myself, I’m sorry for the Missus, that’s what I says, sorry for the Missus.”

If written characters, like manners, make the man, such a paragon as the new-comer had never existed. You might have posted them over every available space on the parish walls, and how he came by them I cannot imagine, and wish people would not be so

very good-natured at their neighbour's expense. Even the Lord-Lieutenant of another county had added his signature, and I am sure it would have rained testimonials and deputations when he departed from among them, only those amiable and interesting institutions were yet in their infancy.

It did strike me as rather strange that anyone should have been willing to part with such a treasure, and he seemed to have roamed about a good deal, and to have had a great number of different places ; but he gave most satisfactory reasons for everything ; some he had left from conscientious motives, and he would be quite overcome at the remembrance of what he had given up for righteousness' sake (never again will I believe in a man who talks about his conscience with the tears in his eyes) ; still, some of his relations were really respectable folks and farmed under my own people, so engaging him was not quite so imprudent as it may appear to be, though I must confess to being a little apt to be taken in by plausible roguery well done.

His conduct for the first three months was irreproachable, and being clever enough for anything, even Mr Broome was satisfied. Then he began to break out, was late in the morning, forgot orders, stayed too long at market, with other ominous symptoms. He would ask leave to attend a funeral, generally a grandmother's, and his appearance as he set off

in a solemn suit of black was so very appropriate, that it was not until I recollect that no one could have more than a certain number of relatives of that type, and that if such a deadly mortality existed in the neighbourhood, I must have heard of it, that my suspicions were aroused, and the funerals traced to an attractive "skittle and beer" establishment in the market town. The state in which I found things after recovering from a short illness brought matters to a conclusion, and I gave him notice to leave, subject to Mr Broome's approval, who came riding over in all haste, as he always did if anything was wrong at Appleton, scolded me, as he always did, for not having sent for him before; marched Dinger off round the farm, blowing him up every five minutes, which reached a climax when we arrived at the turnip field, which had been the grand scene of neglect. He even came down upon me for having let the man go on like that, not listening to my humble explanations of how I had been "sick and sorry." Dinger was to go that very day, that very hour; but those eternal tears came to the rescue, and for once they may have been genuine; and he pleaded so hard for his wife and family, and the injury a sudden dismissal would be to them, that even the business soul of Mr Broome relented, and allowed him to remain until the end of the quarter, subject to good behaviour and instant dismissal if he again transgressed.

The injury to the turnips was not irremediable, a fine open season helping on the growth, while a neighbouring farmer lent me all his hands for a few days to clear up and set things to rights ; and all went on well for a time, and no funerals or outings of any kind allowed. But this did not suit him, and he soon began to rebel again. I suspect some of his boon companions had advised him to resent Mr Broome's supervision and my authority, and they would probably have made application for the place for themselves ; for a day or two before harvest, when he thought I would submit to anything, he struck for terms, and said he would leave at once if he was not allowed to do exactly as he pleased. To his astonishment, I took him at his word, telling him he not only might, but should go, and it was truly a relief to see him and his tiresome wife and children off the premises.

But he had paid me out before he left. He organised a rebellion amongst the harvest men as a legacy, and a large number of them would not begin to cut the corn without a most unreasonable addition to their pay. The trades-unions were not then in existence, but labourers happened to be very scarce that year, and it was doubtful, if I let them go, whether their places could be filled up. I was giving very good wages, but farm hands are as easily led away as a pack of children, only to repent of their folly after-

wards. As I used to tell them in the days of the paid agitators, let any vagabond come round with the gift of the gab, a drum and a flag with a lie on it, and they were ready to follow him round the world at five minutes' notice.

My position was not a very enviable one, the corn waiting to be cut, no steward, and these men threatening to go. It was a mercy that it was only one detachment, and that they very seldom can agree to be troublesome all at once; some are sure to stand by you and behave extra well, and then take a twist on their own account another time. The stock-keepers generally keep aloof on these occasions; they are paid in a different way, are sometimes yearly servants, have not the same inducements to join in a harvest commotion, are fond of the animals in their charge, and less erratic and more reliable than the other men. Then there are the faithful few who never desert you. My yardman, for instance, was one of the best servants that could be had.

I let Mr Broome know what was going on, but entreated him not to leave his own large harvest, and allow me to see if I could pull through alone, as, if I succeeded, it would establish my authority and save trouble in the future.

I decided to run all risks and let the rebels go, and not allow them to remain even if they offered to do so, and sent a man to scour the country for hands to fill

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up their places. He came back with the news that not one was to be had, and that the farmers had hard work to get their numbers together. This was unpleasant, and the only thing I could do was to drive into the town to see if any were to be picked up there, for sometimes labourers who have migrated to the North will come back for the harvest month to see their friends, and be at the old work again. There were several waiting to be hired, and I gave them the shilling (which is equivalent to an enlistment, closes the bargain, and enables you to prosecute them for desertion), and they agreed to come the next day. Then I had to drive home as fast as I could to make arrangements for "bed and board" for the newcomers, some of whom appeared and some did not, having pocketed the shilling and gone elsewhere, and it would have cost more to track them about the country and "have them up" than to leave them alone. The sensible plan would have been to begin with those I had, and collect the rest by degrees, but you cannot get a Norfolk labourer to stir out of the groove. They work at those times in what they call a "company," with a "lord" at the head. Each man is paid the same—say eight pounds, part of which you give to the "lord" in weekly instalments, and the balance at the end, and he keeps the account and divides it among them. However long or short the harvest may be, the amount agreed upon is unchanged,

so it is to their interest to get through with it as quickly as possible ; but you have to see that the work is not slurred over, and keep them up to the mark, for sometimes the temptation of a drinking bout will induce them to leave off at a critical time to their injury, and still more to yours. If you call them off, or employ them on wet days upon any work not connected with harvesting, you pay for that separately. The plan is a good one on the whole, but the drawback is that they cannot be induced to begin until the whole "company" are collected ; they argue that they should be doing the work of the laggards, who would be paid the same as themselves at the end of the time. In vain I pointed out that, when they divided the money, they could make allowance for this ; "they didn't see how it were to be done ; they wouldn't a-minded one or two short, but the 'company' warn't nearly made up, and when the new chaps come in they mightn't like it, and things 'ud be onpleasant." They were polite, but determined, and I was nearly at my wits' end, for when a Norfolker takes to that line of comportment, you might as well try to uproot Mont Blanc. I dare not leave them to go into the town again, for they might have begun to quarrel and fight with the strangers who had already arrived, or the rebels get hold of them, and a thousand other things, yet, what was I to do ? At last I sent a messenger in for any hands that were to be had, from

the public-houses, or wharves, or anywhere, not to mind who or what they were, but to be sure and not come back without them, and a pretty crew he returned with ! The police were on the track of one very villainous-looking man, who was marched off a day or two afterwards. I locked them up over-night, let them out betimes in the morning, gave them the enlistment shilling, and turned them into the fields, taking the steward's place myself, and installing the head ploughman as foreman under me. He was a Methodist preacher, which gave him an authoritative air, and the advantage of being able to harangue them professionally if required, and having persuaded him that it would be better both for his soul and his pocket to stand by me in all fidelity, we set off in style.

The anxiety about the harvest prevented me from thinking of the risk I was running in that lonely place, amongst those rough men of whom I knew nothing, with quite enough valuables in the house to make it worth while to rob and murder me. On pay nights I used to drive home with a large sum of money from the bank, past the woods and heaths ; but no one meddled with me ; I was neither robbed nor murdered. The *coup d'état* proved a great success, and whatever the antecedents of my scratch pack may have been, they behaved in the most exemplary manner, and were obliging, orderly, and respectful.

I was generally the last to leave the fields, preferring to see them all cleared off before me. On fine moonlight nights it would sometimes be between nine and ten o'clock before they had finished, and Tom, Dick, and Harry would have their joke and chaff, for harvesting in fine weather is always a jolly time; but not one coarse word or remark did I hear, or anything that was not fit for a lady's ears; we broke up with a good-night all round, and met again good friends in the morning.

Once only did we have a difference of any kind, for it was not to be expected that they should go straight through without a little "jibbing." They generally get restless once or twice in the harvest, and want to leave off before the time, and if the weather is settled, it is sometimes better policy to give in and take the chance of their working like niggers the next day to make it all right again. I particularly wanted to finish up a field that evening, and they thought they had had enough of it and were not inclined to go on, but with the promise of extra beer, which I went home to fetch, they half agreed to stay. By the time I got back again, perched upon a cart with the beer behind me, they had changed their minds, and were putting on their jackets and collecting their dinner bags, preparatory to dispersing for the night, and wanted to leave off and have the beer as well. That would not do. "You go on working, or I and the

beer go home." For one moment they looked as if they were going to break out, but it passed off, and I and the beer went home unmolested.

One pay-night they began to be a little too rowdy among themselves outside, but upon sending the "Methody" to explain that I could not add up the money with such a distracting noise, and who requested on his own account "to know if they considered themselves in a heathen country," I was allowed to finish my arithmetic in peace and paid them up.

The work was very pleasant, though hard and continuous, and I had not even regular "elevens and fours" like the men; for when they were taking their siesta, I had to look round the stock, and the marsh farm, and the lambs require extra attention at that feverish time of year. My meals I took "promiscuous," when there were a few minutes to spare, and was out again directly. I did not feel so tired on week days, but "dead beat" on Sunday when there was nothing to do, and if I went to church could only "put up my feet and think o' nothink," and might as well have stayed at home. The nursery tea in the nut-walk was the Sunday recreation, but I had to be in harness and out again the first thing on Monday morning. Yet, when the last stack was topped-up and it was time for the party to disperse, I was both sorry and relieved ; we parted the best of friends in a

chorus of harvest cheers, with a few extra ones for me and the child, and we hoped we should all meet again one day, which we never did. The "Methody" was handsomely tipped for his very efficient services, and I suppose all is well that ends well!

CHAPTER IV.

THE COUNTY COURT.

NOTWITHSTANDING the harvest successes, I was not destined to lose sight of Dinger so easily as I imagined ; it is so very difficult to get rid of those ne'er-do-weels, who have everything to get and nothing to lose, and should anyone have relatives answering to that description, they never forsake them until one or the other are in their graves. I found out some still greater delinquencies after he had left, which would have fully entitled me to prosecute *him*, and conclude that my forbearance in not doing so put it into his head to prosecute *me*, for, first came a letter with a demand for the wages (which had been paid up to the day he left) to be extended to the end of the quarter, then a threat of the County Court, and then a summons. I was strongly advised to contest the claim, as it would not have been desirable for the impression to go abroad amongst my labourers and others with whom I had business dealings, that I would submit to any imposition rather than appear in court, and disagreeable as the alternative was, I did

not feel inclined to let him have such a triumph at my expense.

The solicitor I applied to did not "conduct County Court cases, only "instructed" for them, and a clever cross-examiner, noted for carrying his clients on to victory in the face of overwhelming odds, and whose services I hoped to secure, was engaged on the other side. London by no means monopolises all the talents, as is generally supposed. We have also our embryo Lord Chancellors, Archbishops and Prime Ministers, to whom the tide of fortune may never have flowed, or not been taken at the flood, or they may have lacked the indomitable will that sees and feels that victory is to the fore, and never rests until the object of ambition is attained. Some settle down into local professions, become infected with provincial dulness and merge into safe respectable mediocrity ; and upon the whole, genius and brains are out of place in a rural community, and should they happen to run counter to popular prejudices and influences, are more likely than not to get the owner into trouble. The squire who boasted "he had always voted against the d——d intellect, and always would," was quite right, and aspiring spirits in country life had better betake themselves elsewhere, and not be learned overmuch or wiser than their neighbours. But my coming antagonist was one of the few adventurous spirits who had presumed to keep their independence

and wits intact, and upon the prospect of being pitted against his legal talents, my worthy adviser considered it his duty to point out to me solemnly the perils of the situation. He should "be grieved" for me to lose, and it was so unpleasant for a lady to appear in person, and "then you say Dinger is a very plausible man, and he has engaged Hilker, and we never know how these things may turn out, or what view the judge may take." I did not think I should lose; I thought I should win, and I could not accept the "lady" theory, for I had carved out my own queer line of life, and must take things as they came. I was quite resolved not to pay that money when I did not owe it, and was not so very horribly afraid of the judge or Hilker, or anyone else. If I lost there was nothing to be ashamed of, and County Court expenses are very trifling (just what the law ought to be everywhere, neither more nor less), and if I gained the day I should be all right; so I left the office quite prepared to appear as defendant in the great case of *Dinger versus the Lady Farmer*.

The eventful day arrived, and we were ushered into Court, my co-executor and brother-in-law as escort and bodyguard, the lawyer, counsel and witnesses in professional attendance, and a tolerable array of spectators, it being rather a *cause célèbre* in a small way. I had never been mixed up officially with anything of the kind before, and felt a due awe and

reverence at being brought into such close contact with the majesty of the law. The first glance at the judge was reassuring ; he looked a thorough gentleman to begin with, true and just, and as if not one iota of evidence would escape him, and humbug and lies vanish from his presence like the morning dew. I felt safe in his hands.

The case opened on behalf of the plaintiff with an elaborate mis-statement (the facts, of course, supplied by Dinger) of everything that had been said, done, or happened ; and the judge was so excessively polite, listened with such interest and attention, and appeared to be taking such careful notes as it proceeded, that I was afraid he believed it all, while it seemed very hard to be obliged to sit quietly there and listen to these topsy-turvy tales and not be allowed to contradict or disprove them at once. Then Dinger was called up. I observed that his honour scanned him acutely, seemed to measure him up very speedily, and I fancied that the conclusions were not altogether favourable. It must be admitted that he had one very great disadvantage on his side : a farm-steward would be supposed in the course of nature to cheat a lady, and on that occasion, and particularly when his assurance began to desert him, he looked as if nature had intended him for nothing else. He got on fairly well when replying to his own counsel, but not quite so smoothly when the cross-examination began, and

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at last came thoroughly to grief. I have heard that it is extremely difficult to keep up a deception in the witness-box, and when he once began to stumble he went down hill very fast. The funeral dodges were exposed, the conscience clause followed suit, his neglect, idleness and general misconduct came out in bold relief; sundry dubious antecedents were dragged into the light of day, and finally, some farm produce that he had disposed of had not (to put it in the mildest language) been entered in the farm receipts.

The judge looked grave, then stern, did not condescend to take such copious notes as before, and seemed to have heard quite enough, and as if his mind was made up. Dinger made desperate appeals to his honour, but his honour was immovable, dipped his pen mechanically in the ink and made no sign.

Neither friends nor witnesses for the plaintiff being forthcoming to speak on his behalf, it was now the turn for the defence, and Mr Broome stepped into the box, small in stature, but game to the core, and his answers were short, sharp, and decisive. Perhaps he treated the opposing counsel a little too much as a personal enemy, who had no business to stand up for so dubious a character as the plaintiff, forgetting that even murderers must have legal assistance as well as other people, but at all events I had no reason to complain. He completely upset the gravity of a

question upon which a great deal depended, by requesting Mr Hilker "to be so good as not to use such fine words, for he really couldn't understand them," made him translate it into sober English, losing much point and dignity in the process, and then gave it the most unqualified denial. I think Hilker was very glad to get rid of him, for the longer he kept him the more damaging became the case for the plaintiff, and I was a much more hopeful subject when my turn came.

I believe I was only under cross-examination for three-quarters of an hour, but it seemed an eternity. The line taken by the opposition was that I knew nothing and understood less, that Dinger had been an unappreciated treasure, against whom I had been weak-mindedly prejudiced by others, and that I had capriciously dismissed him without just cause and offence, and that he was fully entitled to the amount claimed. I was put through a long course of statistics; the size of the fields, the work and wages of the labourers, and the duties of a steward, and other details of farm management. Fortunately my lonely evenings had been spent in studying the intricacies of my profession and keeping accounts; the labour books were in court for reference if required, so that beyond being tedious and troublesome and requiring some effort of memory, it was not wholly unbearable. Not so the battery of bewildering questions that

followed. Was I quite sure of this and quite certain of that, and had I not said so and so upon such an occasion, and then something quite different another time ; and I began to think once or twice whether I had made a mistake, which I believe you ought never to do, but the judge was very gracious and interposed now and then on my behalf, when he thought I was being "put upon" too much. At last I was set free, and then became aware of a little by-play that had been going on during my martyrdom, for, with a diplomacy worthy of Ballantine himself, my tormentor had managed to convey a slip of paper to my co-executor across the court, in which he deplored the stern necessity that compelled him, in the discharge of his professional duties, to oppose anyone possessing the mental and personal attractions of "the fair defendant !" at which I expressed and believed myself to be extremely indignant ; but finding it to be a generally received axiom, that no woman ever truly and sincerely resents any tribute to her real or supposed charms, let it come from whence it may, and not wishing to claim superiority over the rest of my sex, I will conclude that I was mistaken.

The farm servants were called up next, and I had no fear as to how they would comport themselves ; for, strange to say, instead of being either timid or garrulous, which is what you might expect of them, they display a remarkable talent for subterfuge under

cross-examination, with a *sang froid* and impenetrability that is very misleading, and has been known to baffle the best lawyers on circuit, who, thinking they have got hold of a yokel who will be lured on to destruction, furnishing a good subject for a joke in court, or a tale at the club, on their return to town, suddenly find they have been taken in themselves. It is as well, however, to inquire what sort of evidence they intend to give, or you may be in the same predicament as a man who dragged a labourer up to speak for his character and conduct, and all he could be induced to say on behalf of his friend was "that he never heerd no good on him."

The shepherd was the most wary of the rural detachment. Mr Hilker had taken into his head that upon one of those days when the steward was accused of unlawfully absenting himself, he had only been on some justifiable business errand, and that the shepherd knew this, but did not choose to say so. The man really did *not* know, but was not going to spoil sport by admitting it at once, as many witnesses would have done, and first he put on a bewildered look as if he didn't understand what they meant, and then as if he did understand, but didn't choose to tell, and thought it very hard to give evidence against his mistress, and at last, as if flesh and blood could stand the pressure no longer, gasped out,—

"Well, sir."

Hilker looked enchanted. Not one point had he scored up to that time, and now he thought his hour had come.

"Well, sir. Ah! I thought you knew something about it. Now, Mr Shepherd, be so good as to tell me where Mr Dinger was on that occasion?"

"Well, sir."

"Come, come, shepherd, don't keep his honour and the court waiting here all day. Now, I ask you once again, *where was* Mr Dinger on that occasion?"

"Well, sir. He were *somewhere*."

Poor Mr Hilker made a painful effort to join in the outbreak of laughter that followed this announcement, but had had enough of the case by that time, and after going through a few more formalities, elected to be "nonsuited with costs," and probably expressed his mind pretty freely to his misleading client when they got out of court. This really was the last of Dinger, so far as I was concerned, and I believe he afterwards emigrated to some distant settlement, where he perhaps turned over a new leaf, and, for aught I know, may be a shining light in some new state of society unto this day.

CHAPTER V.

HOW I GOT TO "LOGGERHEADS" WITH MY ROYAL MASTER.

I CONTINUED to be my own steward for some time, gaining much valuable experience, but the work would have been too severe for a continuance; and as, upon all farms of extensive acreage, the assistance of a foreman is in dispensable, I engaged a worthy man in that capacity, who remained with me for years, and of whom, like a prosperous and peaceable nation, I have no history or adventures to relate; and with the exception of the ups and downs incidental to most investments of that nature, matters would have gone on in the average course, with a fair return for the outlay, had it not been for the circumstances of residing on a Royal estate, and the supreme misfortune of offending my Royal landlord almost from the commencement of my career.

No one can be more pleasant and agreeable than His Royal Highness, if you go with him in everything, and do exactly what he likes; on the other hand, he can be very unpleasant indeed, if you are

compelled to do what he does not like ; and why it should have been the fate of an obscure individual like myself to cross the path of the future King of England and Emperor of India, is beyond my comprehension. But so it came to pass, and I will tell my tale without comment, leaving my readers, if I have any, to form their own conclusions, which in all probability will be given against my unlucky self and in favour of the powers that be, especially when it is remembered that those powers are embodied in the all-subjugating Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, K.G. From my own sex under those circumstances I expect no mercy, and shall probably find none, unless they are under the impression that I have always been a hopelessly ugly woman, which might dispose them to take a more favourable view of the situation.

“ Strive not with a mighty man,” says that famous “ Imitator of the Wisest of Men.” I had not remarked that admirable advice until too late to profit by it, or if I had, might possibly have disregarded it with the usual conceit of inexperience. So I strove with the mighty man and came out very much the worse for the encounter, as I shall presently relate.

The introduction of the battue system in the most objectionable form, with a ruinous swarm of ground game to be fed and kept at my expense, led to this catastrophe, from the effects of which I may suffer more or less to the end of my days. It was particu-

larly trying in my case, as we had departed from the usual custom, and made a special agreement about the game when settling in the farm, it being the general plan to leave it to the honour of the landlord, with the understanding that it shall not be increased during the tenancy; and had Mr Cowper continued in possession, we should have been quite justified in not making any inquiries and taking for granted that no injury would be done. But as the battue system was creeping in and becoming the fashion among the *jeunesse dorée*, we thought it would be better to make inquiries as to the Prince's intentions, for we would not have embarked upon a game farm on any account, or however low the rent might be; and my husband told the late Mr —, the London lawyer, that he would give it up at once if such a thing were in contemplation. He was assured that we need be under no apprehension, and the rent was fixed, with the agreement that no injury should be done by ground game; and I believe Mr — meant what he said, for he had been one of the Prince Consort's men of business, and had he lived I feel sure he would have insisted upon the promise being carried out to the extent of his power. He seemed very anxious to secure my husband for the Appleton Farm, and thought it would be nice for the Prince to have him there; and having informed us that it was the wish of our "illustrious landlord" that we should

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be "liberally treated," and inspected our banker's book, and pronounced it to be quite satisfactory, we proceeded to invest the contents in all hope and confidence.

Our happy prospects did not remain long unclouded—ominous signs of trouble to come began to dawn upon the horizon, and it soon became evident that game, game, nothing but game, was to be the order of the day. Not that we intended quietly to submit to such a flagrant breach of agreement; my husband would have been quite capable of insisting that it should be stopped at once, and if remonstrances were ineffectual, of waging open war, and putting down the nuisance in some shape or other; but symptoms of the lingering low fever that ended so fatally had already set in, and I was so fearful of the effects of any excitement, that I persuaded him to put it off until the Prince came down again, when I hoped all would be made right without any difficulty. I did it for the best, but have often thought since that it would have worried him less to have had it decided at once. It was a dry hot summer that year, and particularly favourable for the increase of ground game, which, if not kept in check, seem almost to grow out of the earth; and it is too painful to recall how he, who had been all that was cheerful and strong, one of those people who make the dullest room seem brighter when they enter it, would now

come in wearied with increasing illness, and harassed at the destruction going on out of doors, until at last it positively haunted him.

I had many and bitter experiences in after years, but I minded this more than all. I sometimes felt he might have recovered if this anxiety had not been added to the natural depression of the illness, which at last drifted into hopelessness. I was thankful that through Mr Broome's kindness in offering, and indeed insisting, upon taking charge of the farm in our absence, we were enabled to go away for the last few weeks ; for though, apart from this new anxiety, we should have preferred to remain in our own home, it was now an intense comfort to be relieved from all the cares of life and in rest and peace together to the last.

I need not say that the game entered very largely into the calculations when my going or remaining was under discussion ; for as Mr Broome truly remarked, " If they mean to eat you up alive, it's no use your attempting to farm ; you couldn't live rent free and a present into the bargain ;" but considering how much had been now sunk beyond recall, and that it was desirable for many reasons that I should stay, it was decided that the risk should be run, Mr Broome hoping they would be reasonable and come round in time, " for if I could not get on there, with one child and a private income, who could ? and it would be

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vexatious to go and then find matters would have come right if I had not hurried away."

Our expenses had indeed been enormous; there seems to be no end to them when you have once begun to set miles of worn-out dilapidations in order. The old men had done their work well, and I ought to have followed their example in after years, and left the place the wilderness we found it.

The Prince came down and all hope of relief vanished; he was infatuated with the shooting; it became a perfect passion with him, and nothing made him more angry than the slightest opposition to it. I do not mean to say that he was worse than any other young man might have been, but that did not mend matters for me, and the harassing life that was before me was not a pleasant contemplation.

One man and a few helpers had sufficed for Mr Cowper, but now a newly-imported head-keeper, with an organised staff of officials, took possession of the place in military style, and parcelled out my farm like policemen's beats, some of the battalion being told off in charge, and a cottage built for them at either end, whilst I had been entreating for necessary accommodation for my labourers without success. Without either "with, or by your leave," strips were cut across some of my fields like a gridiron, and planted for game shelters, and until the trees were sufficiently grown to smother them, a mass of noxious weeds grew;

seeded and blew all over my crops and the newly-cleaned land, no one being allowed to cut them down for fear of disturbing the nesting.

The duties of the under-keepers on the beats were to rear as much game as the land would carry, and report upon everything they considered inimical to it, and my farming operations were expected to be sacrificed and subordinated to their convenience. The reports were carried to the head-keeper, and often on to the Prince, and they also had the privilege of prowling about day and night, which is necessary to keep off poachers and marauders. But there are limits to everything, and this was decidedly overdone ; and as a farmer expressed it, when unburdening his mind to me one day, “They’re always a-spyin’ here and a-pryin’ there, and a-watchin’ everythink I du, and at my time o’ life it ain’t pleasant, and then the head-keeper he goo by and he niver touch his hat, and look at me as much as to say, ‘You’re no friend o’ mine.’ That’s how *he* look ; and then when I goo round and see those kangaroos (the hares) a-hoppin’ and jumpin’ about my crops, it make me right ill, it du.”

It did not much matter how anybody looked, or whether their hats were off or on ; that cost nothing, and the keepers on my beat were very civil ; and the “kangaroos” might have hopped and jumped to all eternity if they had not jammed down the crops in the process, and feasted themselves on the way, break-

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fasting upon the choicest swedes, cutting off the mangolds at a certain stage when the saccharine matter begins to form in the joints (for they are the daintiest little brutes alive), devouring any delicacy that had been reserved for the lambs, gnawing the sainfoin, a very expensive plant, down to the ground, until, as my labourers said, "It warn't o' no use o' its growen," and biting off the ears of wheat when, like the mangolds, the joints began to be palatable, and strewing them on the ground. I have often picked them up in bundles, crying over the havoc with mingled rage and grief! They were not quite so "partial" to barley and oats, making a raid upon them now and then for a change, and on this principle would bark the young fruit and rose trees, decimate the vegetables, and leave not a crocus or any of the carnation tribe alone. Rabbits are not so bad in one way, for they eat straight on, clearing everything off as they go, and more easy to fence against, whilst the "kangaroos" frolic all over the place, turning up in every direction. When I rode or drove across the fields, they would start up at my pony's feet, gathering like a snowball, and run along before me like a little pack of hounds, while some of the most "owdacious" ones would stand upright on their hind legs with an air of irritating self-possession, as if they knew they were Royal property and dared me to touch them, and then spin round and round and off again as hard as they could

scamper. I never "wanted for company" out farming, only it was of the wrong sort, and I did not think I could have lived to hate any species of the animal creation so much. Sometimes, from curiosity to see the number there, I would give a "view halloo!" at the corner of a wheat field, when up would jump a swarm of little brown ears in the corn, like a regiment of soldiers in ambush.

Farming may be an inferior and clod-hopping pursuit compared with literature and the fine arts, only if it happens to be the pride and delight of your life, your feelings are the same, however misapplied they may be. Let a painter imagine his ethereal creations smeared and bedaubed by unseen hands; the sculptor, his breathing marble chipped and disfigured; the musician, his favourite instrument broken; the author, the inspiration of his pen scribbled over beyond deciphering, and they may have a glimmering of what it cost me, after toiling through the usual agricultural operations, and landing my crops safely through the perils of rust, mildew, wireworm, and other unavoidable enemies, to see them fall into the jaws of my little tormentors, until it made me feel "right ill" too, and got upon my nerves and haunted my dreams at night.

Nor was the "spyin' and pryin'" without its drawbacks. The under-keepers vied with one another as

to who should show the most game on their respective beats. This power of being able to send in any reports they pleased was open to very grave abuses; for, supposing they neglected their work, or anything went wrong on the grand shooting days, it was a great temptation to lay the blame upon me, and represent that I had done something to cause it. One of the faults that I had occasion to find with the Prince during my residence on his property was, the fatal habit of listening to tales from any quarter, without taking the trouble to inquire into the truth of them, which I attribute to his not having passed through the wholesome discipline of a public school, where boys contract a horror of sneaks and sneaking, and also to that love of gossip inherent in the race of Guelph, a cheerful, sociable quality enough, making you feel pleasantly at home with the Blood Royal (the weaknesses of great people being much more sympathetic than their loftier attributes), but leading to grave results when the gossip is malicious and you are the victim. What with the game to begin with, and estate reports for a continuance and conclusion, I lived in a sort of chronic disgrace, with lucid intervals, until I was finally routed in one stampede of mischief-making.

The shooting days were another nuisance. I should have had no objection to them had they been reasonably conducted, but nothing was reasonably

conducted, and I can only compare them to an invading army upon an enemy's territory.

For the benefit of the uninitiated, I will describe a Royal battue in the "open." The fields were cleared for action early in the morning, and I had to stop the work and keep the men at home, field machinery, etc., at a standstill. One year I lost part of the turnip crop in that way, for having engaged a gang of thirty hands from a distance to "pull, top and tail, heap and mould up" by the acre, they were ordered off the fields for three days in succession; a frost set in, and the roots remained out in it, exposed to the weather and game.

I was not legally compelled to allow this, but, in the country, legality goes for very little, and, had I made any resistance, I might have been accused of all sorts of things—of complaining of the game, and then preventing it from being killed down—of spoiling sport, and so forth, and been in a worse position than before. I should have made a stand over the turnip crop, only I was in another part of the farm when the people were turned out, and when those gangs have dispersed and gone to work in different directions, you cannot get them together again.

A complete silence having been secured for miles round, the day was ushered in by a procession of boys with blue and pink flags, like a Sunday School treat, a band of gamekeepers in green and gold, with the

head man on horseback, an army of beaters in smocks and hats bound with Royal red, a caravan for the reception of the game, and a tailing off of loafers to see the fun, for H.R.H. is very good-natured in allowing people to look on at his amusements, provided they do not interfere with them, and, if it could be conveniently managed, would perhaps have no objection to everybody's life being "skittles and beer" like his own.

At about eleven o'clock the Royal party arrive in a string of waggonettes, and range themselves in a long line under the fences or behind the shelters put up for that purpose, each sportsman having loaders in attendance with an extra gun or guns to hand backwards and forwards, to load and reload. The boys and beaters are stationed in a semi-circle some distance off, and it is their place to beat up the birds and drive them to the fences, the waving flags frightening them from flying back. On they come in ever-increasing numbers, until they burst in a cloud over the fence where the guns are concealed. This is the exciting moment; a terrific fusilade ensues, birds dropping down in all directions, wheeling about in confusion between the flags and the guns, the survivors gathering themselves together and escaping into the fields beyond. The shooting party then retire to another line of fencing, making themselves comfortable with campstools and cigars until

the birds are driven up as before, and so on through the day, only leaving off for luncheon in a tent brought down from Sandringham, or in very cold weather it is carried into the nearest house.

It requires good, steady markmanship for this style of shooting (for involving neither danger nor fatigue it can hardly be called "sport"), and the birds have no chance of escape; indeed, after a few engagements, the old ones become quite strategical and know the flags are their friends and fly back through them, or veer round to the right or left out of range. This is altogether superior to the pheasant battue, when the birds are brought up in hen-coops and turned out tame into the woods to be shot down in thousands. Any fine autumn evening at Sandringham you may see them perched on the park wall, and not greatly disconcerted at your approach.

The hares are dispatched upon a still lower scale of slaughter, and they might as well have fired into a flock of sheep in a fold, an amusement which, I am thankful to say, did not suggest itself to them, or I tremble to think of what the uncompensated consequence might have been.

A wild country was the proper place for these military manœuvres, instead of highly-cultivated farms; for on the partridge-driving days, if the Royal party did not do any individual harm, the village boys made it a carnival, enjoyed trampling

down all before them, breaking fences and gates, and doing as much mischief as they could, unconsciously carrying out the latest philanthropic craze, of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the sacrifice of the few to the many, the elevation of the masses, and other benevolences with which I had no sympathy. Personal loss and inconvenience is a curious antidote to sentimental views upon the rights of property. When riding round after the invaders had retired, the general air of devastation left in their wake, the empty cartridges strewed about, and listening to the mournful chirruping of the poor little birds for their lost relatives, was a "dree" accompaniment to my solitude.

C H A P T E R V I.

I S P E A K O U T.

MATTERS having at length reached the point at which desperation sets in, I resolved that, if the workhouse were my destiny, I would at least have the satisfaction of feeling that I had not come to ruin through fear of "speaking out," and speak out I accordingly resolved to do.

I was no cockney. My life had been passed amongst the best description of sport. A brother had been the popular master of a crack pack in the "shires." Hounds in full cry were music to my ears, and I had of course married to sport, and hoped to bring up my boy in the way he should go. I would have taken a pride in preserving a fair or even an extra amount of game for the Prince, and obliging him in every way, being very loyal in earlier days; but to be subjected to these high-handed proceedings, suspected instead of trusted, and treated like a poacher, until I began to feel like one, was ignominious and degrading to the last degree. I seemed to have come down in the world for the first time in my

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life. One sporting friend kindly remarked, "It was a beastly shame to me of all women;" while another, after looking round at the destruction, said, if he were in my place, he should feel inclined to pay them out by smashing every partridge's nest in the place. That I could not do; old sporting feelings were still too strong, and petty revenge is contemptible, for the birds did me comparatively little harm.

But "vulgar money" considerations now began to absorb all private mortification. I wonder why that opprobrious epithet should be thought applicable to so useful a commodity? Its possession seems to grease the wheels of life in a very comfortable manner, and had I had enough and to spare, how different my lot would have been; I could have afforded the game and not offended the Prince, and remained in my house, and so on like the "House that Jack built."

Marvellously little is made out of farming in comparison with other trades, and a few hundreds one way or another will soon upset the balance of profit and loss. The first few years after entering a new holding is a very critical time; you have invested your capital, and have to wait a long while before anything comes in, and our expenses had been increased by the new house and buildings; for, in addition to the annual five per cent. interest charged upon the greater part of the outlay, the whole of the carting was handed over to me to pay, amounting to

more than three hundred pounds, and everything left in an unfinished state for me to complete ; and I also had to lay out the gardens, buy and plant shrubs and fruit trees, cart gravel for paths, dig up old foundations, clear away broken-down walls, and a thousand other things, that soon amounted to serious sums, which could only be managed by degrees, leaving off when there was a press of work on the farm, and beginning again when there was less to do, turning a deaf ear to the intimations that the Prince was annoyed at my not finishing it off at once, as he liked to see everything in grand order when he came round with his friends ; for it would have cost me twice as much, and after all, I was doing his work, and ought to have had thanks instead of complaints. I believe those things were never properly explained to the Prince, or wilfully mis-stated, whereas, if I had belonged to the "under-strapper" brigade, and the work done and paid for out of his own money, H.R.H. would have been none the wiser, and his attention probably directed to my energetic and obliging conduct.

I was certainly promised repayment in the event of leaving, and when I hinted at something more definite, and that a written acknowledgment would be satisfactory, wording the request in the most delicate terms I could think of, it was met with indignant virtue (my doubting Royal honour !) and dark hints "that if I wished to go upon the commercial system

I should find it a great mistake," so it seemed better to bear the ills I had than fly to others that I knew not of.

The rent day came round without the smallest return for damages, and I had to borrow of the bank to meet the deficiency. The time seemed to have arrived when something definite must be settled one way or another.

There was no prospect of the ground game diminishing ; on the contrary, I had reasons for believing that live hares had been imported from another estate and turned down to add to the natural increase. The remonstrances respectfully made from time to time had done no good and given great offence. Not that I stood alone in that, for I heard that the other farmers had departed from their usual course, and instead of grumbling everlasting, and doing nothing definite, had made quite a demonstration at the audit, and the oldest tenant on the estate had given notice to quit.

They did not like anyone to complain of the game. The Prince was not so popular at that time,—the "Public" not having woke up to those fervid outbreaks of loyalty which are now their leading pantomime ; besides, they were afraid of the Radical newspapers getting hold of it, and its coming before the nation in some way or other, which accounted for their excessive indignation when I began to lift up *my* voice.

They seemed to have been under the impression that I should be "above" complaining or asking to be paid, and perhaps had an idea that, from the unusual circumstances of being managed by a lady, my farm was more conspicuous than the generality, and the facts might become known beyond the limits of Lynn market. But my finances not admitting of my taking up a lofty and exceptional position, it was settled that I should make a formal and business-like appeal upon the first available opportunity.

The London lawyer came down for the audits and met the land-agent, while Mr Broome transacted the necessary business for me and attended the rent-dinner; but this time I was to go in myself, accompanied by a brother-in-law and co-executor, so as to make a more imposing demonstration.

The management had changed hands during the last few years. The Prince Consort's legal man-of-business was succeeded by his son, and a sharp country auctioneer, who had been employed in selling wood in the plantations, had been promoted into the land-steward's place, or "agents," as they are called in Norfolk. The Comptroller of the Household was supposed to be at the head of estate matters, but owing to his multifarious duties and long absences, the work devolved too much upon subordinates. I have read in a newspaper report that the real management was in the Prince's hands, and that if anyone had a complaint

to make, he received them personally, made inquiries and redressed all grievances, and this was held up as an example for other landlords to follow. During my long residence on his property, I never heard of the Prince receiving or listening to any of the residents on business matters. He seemed to hear all that was going on, too often in an upside-down fashion, and all the news and gossip into the bargain ; but I have often heard it regretted that it was impossible to tell the Prince how things really stood. Kings may love those who speak the truth, but I suspect they very seldom have that felicity. I tried once or twice to put in a little wedge of business when honoured with the opportunity of conversing with his Royal Highness, but he was quite unapproachable upon estate matters ; and as "manners are manners," I could not when invited to his house, or when the Royalties came to Appleton, intrude subjects upon him that he did not choose to hear.

I drove in to Lynn to pick up my relatives on the way to the hotel where the meeting was to take place ; but when I appeared with a specimen bouquet of mangold tops that the hares had bitten off, they looked quite alarmed, and wanted me to leave it behind ; and it was "Come, Louise, you *can't* go with that thing ; it looks exactly like a bludgeon. I declare if you do I won't go ; you'd much better not ; it will only make a row ! " and other masculine arguments, for the men

always think the women are going to make a disturbance, and never give them credit for conducting things in a sensible fashion. I was not willing to part with my "bludgeon," or to let them off their bargain, and at last succeeded in marching them off, a couple of victims, down the streets until we reached our destination. Mr Broome, who was also with us, did not so much object to the mangold tops, and after giving a comical look at them, remarked that "It was not a bad idea" (praise in Norfolk is always negative), "and, at all events, they couldn't say that there was no damage done, when there it was!"

We were ushered up into the room, and the great man from London bowed down to his toes, for his manners were superlative, thickly interlarded with compliments to the lady-farmer; but I felt that he had some pretty sharp claws stowed away under all the smoothness, and that the politeness might be very speedily changed into something not quite so pleasant. The land-agent looked frightened and confused, and fussed about to get us chairs; he always was fussing about and offering to do something for you which took me in for many a year, and I thought what a civil, obliging man he was, and how fortunate that he should be so well-behaved.

I do not remember what the others did, but I know dear old F— planted himself well behind me, and looked prepared for the worst, as if I were going to do

something dreadful, and I think someone made a nervous remark about the weather, and then awaited the impending volcano in silence. The unexpected generally happens. I had no intention of making a disturbance ; I merely laid the "bludgeon" quietly upon the table and said that "I did not know where the rent was to come from, for my wheat was seriously injured, and here was a specimen of the mangold crop." The lawyer tried to look as if he had never heard of such a thing as hares or game damages before, just as a lodging-house landlady will protest that a certain noxious insect was never seen upon her premises until you came and invented it. Had I been alone I should have had no chance of contending with him. But here came the advantage of being provided with an escort, for it seemed highly improbable that three men, including a well-known agriculturist, would have come to back me up in an imaginary grievance ; and after a long parleying and pros and cons it was agreed that the damage for that one summer should be valued and paid for,—a great concession gained, as it admitted damage done and the right of payment. Mr Broome did not want to pay the rent until the game bill had been made out and settled ; neither did I ; but the others thought I had better yield that point. F—, who was so relieved at the prospect of a peaceable termination to the business, provokingly prompting me from behind, which, of

course, they overheard, with "It will be all right, Louise, all right," when it was much more likely to be all wrong. However, we had done pretty well on the whole, and better than I expected, though they had succeeded in "collaring" a cheque for the rent, as Mr Broome remarked. When we retired, we were bowed out by the London lawyer, the obsequious land-agent opening the door for us and looking as if the door handle was his very best friend.

C H A P T E R V I I.

IN DEEP DISGRACE.

THE "little bill" for damages was as follows:—

On 37 acres of wheat, average damage done, 2 cmbs. per acre, @ 28s. the cmb., . . .	£103 12
On 73 acres wheat, 1 cmb. per acre, @ 28s., . . .	102 4
On 170 acres barley, 1 cmb. per acre, @ 20s., . . .	170 0
On rye (25 acres), 6 bushels per acre, @ 4s., . . .	30 0
Mangolds, damage on 24 acres, 50s. per acre, . . .	60 0
Clover layers,	50 0
Turnips,	60 0
	<hr/>
	£575 16

It was submitted to my approval before being sent in, and I considered it far below the value. You never get full compensation in those cases ; there are the indirect losses that are not taken into account, such as selling your sheep when half fat in a bad market because their keep has been eaten up ; the ewes dying from eating unsound turnips (the frost always rotting the bitten ones) ; and I have lost lambs in large numbers for want of proper food, and dragging about on damp pastures, the dry healthy "new layers" having gone the "way of all hares."

Then you do not know what amount of stock to buy in, and your calculations are upset in all directions ; and looking at it all round, you may fairly reckon that the losses from these causes are as much or more than the visible damages noted down by the valuers on their rounds, the "wear and tear" and "fret and worrit" you must put up with, or it would make a considerable item in the account.

Now, according to all rules and precedents, when a valuation is agreed upon, the valuers chosen by mutual consent, the sum total has to be paid by the aggressor, unless clear proof can be given that it is exorbitant and unreasonable ; but I think that what with the bludgeon and my "followers," I had taken them by surprise on that memorable afternoon, and that upon sober reflection they repented of the concession they had made, and wanted to be off the bargain. The lawyer had gone back to town, leaving the land-agent to settle the matter, and I suspect he was in a desperate fright for fear the Prince should be down upon him for taking too much upon himself, also, not having been very long at his post, he may have been anxious to take up a large haul of rentals. I did not want to get the man or anyone else into trouble, but would not relinquish the payment due, as trustee to my boy, and farming with his money I had no right to take a farthing less than the award.

From one or two remarks that dropped during the argument over it, I believe their bogus, the "British Public," stood between me and my due; the payment for damages was a proof of damages, and they did not want those figures to go before the country; quite an unnecessary terror; I can be silent where interest demands it, and should assuredly not have taken the "Public" into my confidence and cut off the possibility of future payments. Finding me quite impracticable, they paid less than half into my banker's account, without my knowledge and consent, obtained a receipt for it, and so completely circumvented me, with the advantage of having a virtuous-looking document to file up in the royal offices.

I did not "grin and bear" this, and should have returned the amount of the cheque, had I not been wisely reminded that I might then get nothing at all, and advised to send a receipt on "account," and claim the balance, which I continued to do with such pertinacity, even hinting at legal proceedings, that the debt was eventually admitted, and I was promised that payment should be forthcoming, but it never was. Verily, if the word "goose" did not exist in the English language, it would have to be invented on purpose for me!

You are told not to rake up old grievances—a very convenient discourse from the strong to the weak. Grievances cannot be old until they are redressed,

but are ever green and flourishing until the day of restitution.

Matters went on smoothly for a time, and then another storm burst upon my head. I had named my difficulties to a Member of Parliament well versed in agricultural matters. Through some misunderstanding, he considered himself at liberty to bring the case before the notice of Government; and I was rather startled one morning to find that my letter, giving all particulars of the damages and non-payment of costs, had been read out in the House of Commons the night before. To think that after all their precautions the murder was out, and through *me!* I believe the report was omitted in the London daily papers, but an independent agricultural weekly journal inserted the whole account, which was conveyed in all haste to the Prince.

The only way in which I could have got out of the scrape would have been by throwing all the blame upon Mr —, humbling myself to the dust and using Court influence to convey agonising appeals for forgiveness. This I could not do. The statements made in the House being strictly correct, I could neither retract nor withdraw them, though I do not think I should have allowed the case to come on had I been aware that it was in contemplation.

The very worst must have been made of it to His Royal Highness, who scowled at me in true Henry the

Eighth style whenever he chanced to meet me ; and if kings had power of life and death in those days, which I am glad they have not, I know where my head would have been ; for our most good-natured of Princes has some very despotic tendencies ; nay, did not George the Fourth in his Prince of Wales days give a hint to one of his satellites to dispose of a wretched Frenchman who annoyed him by demanding the payment of his "little bill," and was he not smuggled over to Paris at the time of the Revolution, and then and there guillotined by the Red Republicans, who could not have known whom they were obliging !

Power is a dangerous thing, from the small nursery tyrant upwards, and how few do we meet in our daily lives, or hear of in public places, who can be safely entrusted with it ; and we have done wisely in transferring it from our hereditary rulers to those who can be turned out if they don't "sute the place ;" only perhaps we are rather hard upon our Grand Old Men, and bully and badger and keep them on the grind-stone, getting a very large amount of work done for a very small amount of pay, until it is wonderful that anyone can be found to undertake so thankless an office.

For three long years did I live in an atmosphere of misrepresentation, black lettered, labelled dangerous, looked upon suspiciously by courtiers from within

and without, to the great concern of my good friend, Mr Onslow, Rector of Sandringham and Domestic Chaplain to their Royal Highnesses, who was distressed to see me in such a position, yet courageous enough (as he always was) where justice and fair-play were concerned, to remonstrate with H.R.H. on my behalf, though without effect. My offence was beyond forgiveness, and the punishment might have gone on into perpetuity had not an event occurred that brought about an unexpected change for the better.

I was calling at the Rectory one afternoon, where, through evil report and good report, I was always welcome; and hearing from Mrs Onslow that her son had something particular to tell me, I waited until he came in. I thought he looked nervous and uncomfortable, as if the news were not of a pleasant nature; but when he began asking me if I had heard that seventy-one pheasants had been found dead in the plantations, I did not dream of its having any reference to myself, and said I had heard something about a number being missed in the woods one night.

“But I am afraid your name is mixed up with it in rather an unpleasant manner,” he added, more nervously than before.

“My name! What can I have to do with it?”

He looked still more uncomfortable, until at last it

dawned upon me, and I screamed out, "You don't mean to say they say *I* killed those pheasants?" And truly shocked that a lady should be accused of such an atrocious act, for he was the embodiment of an old-fashioned chivalry now nearly extinct, he answered that "such was the case."

The Hall at Sandringham was being rebuilt, and the Prince had hired Lord ——'s place for the shooting season, where he was entertaining a large party, among them being Mr Onslow and the well-known veteran sportsman, General Hall of Six Mile Bottom, with whom I was also acquainted. They were all assembled together when the Sandringham gamekeeper arrived with the news that I had killed seventy-one pheasants in the plantations, and announced it to the Prince in the presence of his guests.

The explosion that followed must have been terrific. H.R.H., having been so industriously prejudiced against me for years, was ready to believe anything; and though I did not hear particulars of the epithets invoked upon my head, a little leaked out through one or two of the people there, who said they had never heard such a row in their lives.

Whilst the storm was raging, my good friends Mr Onslow and General Hall were confabbing together. They agreed that it was quite impossible I could have done such a thing, and they must see what they could

do for me ; and with a courage worthy of the Victoria Cross they marched up to the cannon's mouth and respectfully requested the Prince to allow them to report to me what had taken place, and grant me the opportunity of defending myself. They were not successful at first, but one or two of the party began to come round to their view ; the Duke of Cambridge, who was accustomed to court-martials, giving a decided opinion "that there should be an inquiry." (I always liked the Duke. He was invariably good-natured to me, and had a sociable George the Third habit of asking questions and saying "What ?" and I had reason to remember with gratitude his interposition on that occasion.)

The Prince was at last over-ruled, and gave a grudging permission for me to be made acquainted with my high crime and misdemeanour, and not be gibbeted without some sort of trial. Mr Onslow was deputed to break the intelligence, who promised to write all particulars to the General, and was coming down to me about it if I had not happened to call at the Rectory. My first impulse was to "cut up rusty." I won't compare myself to a worm, but one must "turn again" sometimes, and I declared I would not contradict one word of it—"If the Prince chose to listen to tales, let him ; I did not care whether he believed or disbelieved them ;" and the only thing that brought me to a more reasonable frame of mind was the con-

sideration that it would be ungrateful to the friends who had taken so much trouble on my account, for which reason I at last condescended to justify myself and give the following particulars.

A few months before the agent had informed me that the Prince intended to preserve foxes for the hunt, and asked me to bring up a litter of cubs, as I understood all about them. It seemed rather strange to be asked a favour when in disgrace, and also that the Prince should have taken a sudden fancy to *bona-fide* fox-preserving. The hounds were allowed to meet at Sandringham, but H.R.H. was not very ardent about it. You may manage foxes and pheasants in the woods and forests of the shires, but in the small Norfolk plantations, to use a sporting expression, "they play the deuce with them." They have to be kept off at night with fires and watchers, so you cannot be surprised that the great game-preservers and their keepers are not enthusiastic on the subject, some openly announcing that they will not have foxes or allow the hounds to draw their coverts.

I had no objection to take charge of the little "beasties," and said I would not let them out until I had an order from headquarters. They were a great deal of trouble to keep in, and began to burrow under the walls of the place where they were kept, and I was very glad when directions came to turn them into a brick earth at the end of the farm. The letter con-

tained profuse thanks for the trouble I had taken, and I expected to hear no more about it.

Afterwards came the destruction of these seventy-one pheasants, and if they were killed by foxes, it is my belief that it was done by an old one from Anmer, a neighbouring property, when a careless watcher was off his post at night, as the cubs would hardly have left a gorse covert swarming with rabbits and found their way up to the Sandringham plantations at that period of their existence. The land-agent and head gamekeeper were, I believe, at deadly feud, and it may not have been properly explained to the latter that the cubs had been turned out at a safe distance, and the man hearing about Appleton foxes, jumped to the conclusion that I had let out full-grown ones into his sacred pheasant plantations for the express purpose of destroying his game, and went off with this version to the Prince.

All these particulars were placed in Mr Onslow's hands and forwarded to the General, who considered that they completely vindicated me, and sent me his warmest congratulations. The next thing to be done was to approach the Prince with the result of the inquiry, and this Mr Onslow undertook—no very pleasant task, as the Royal anger had not yet subsided, for I heard of my misdeeds in all directions, even in London, *via* Marlborough House and elsewhere. In Norfolk you expect people to be gossiping

up and down the country, and Sandringham news are a perpetual feast.

My friend, the Rector, was delighted to inform me that the Prince was "more tempered now," and would inquire further about it when he came down. I am afraid I was not so overjoyed at this intelligence as I ought to have been ; it seemed such a fuss-about-rubbish, storm - in - a - teacup affair. Certainly if nothing is too great for Royal personages, nothing is too small—a proof, I have heard, of a very grand order of mind.

The final inquiry consisted of a grand court-martial being held in the Prince's presence, with the Lord Lieutenant of the county as cross-examiner and umpire, Mr Onslow to represent me and my interests, and the keeper, agent, and some non-official spectators. The evidence in my favour was so overwhelming that a verdict of "Not Guilty" was speedily arrived at, his Lordship being so good as to supplement it by placing my conduct and the difficulties of my position in the most favourable light to His Royal Highness, who graciously condescended to express himself satisfied with the result, and sent me word afterwards that it arose from a "misconception of facts." Would not a "misconception of lies" have been a more appropriate explanation ?

I never discovered the exact truth of that affair. In after years it was reported to me, that the game-

keeper laid the whole blame upon the agent, and declared that he never dare face him afterwards, and being a very formidable-looking man, as keepers mostly are, that part of the tale was likely to be true; but it was better for me not to inquire into servants' quarrels beyond what concerned myself; and as the one was promoted to the charge of the Queen's preserves in Windsor Park, and the friendship of Mr John Brown, and the other is, I believe, still flourishing at Sandringham, their prospects could not have been materially injured, whilst mine were decidedly improved.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPORT AND CRUELTY.

SINCE the passing of the Ground Game Act, these damages and disputes are becoming a thing of the past, and in a few years it will hardly be credited that whilst Irishmen were amusing themselves by shooting down the landed proprietors for the crime of possessing what belonged to them, and which had been bought and paid for, able-bodied British farmers should have submitted to go to ruin with their hands tied, and looked on at the wholesale destruction of their property without lifting up a finger to prevent it, when by combining together they might easily have made short work of any unreasonable increase in their four-footed enemies. They would have conquered in the end; strong measures are rarely unsuccessful, and justice, though not law, was on their side; and their long-suffering can only be attributed to the rooted objection of that class to break through traditional habits and venture out of the groove. Sacred had the squire's game been to them from time immemorial, and sacred it continued to be

through all provocation. One poor man in the "sheers" committed suicide in a fit of desperation over his losses, his last words being "rabbits have killed me." How much better it would have been if he and his friends had killed the rabbits!

I would have put down the hares quickly enough if any one in this Prince-ridden county could have been found to help me. It was useless to appeal to my landlord connections and neighbours; it is a matter of etiquette not to interfere with one another's property, and with a Royal estate it would be little short of high treason; also the game was a touchy point with them, and they were not very pleased at the prominent part I had already taken. Then the farmers were afraid, and the labourers "dusn't," while it was physically impossible for me to manage it alone, and unless it could be thoroughly done it was better not to attempt it, and perhaps irritate the keepers into damaging my property at night, when I could not be on the watch after being out so much in the day.

Every invention that could be thought of for keeping the enemy at bay, I tried in succession—tarring the runs, stuffing up the gaps with bundles of gorse, and one year I saved the mangold crop by cutting old canvas bags in strips, sewing them together and staking them round the field, which looked as if I had been taking in a gigantic wash for the county of Nor-

86 *Eighteen Years on the Sandringham Estate.*

folk, and gave great offence at Sandringham, any attempt at self-protection being always resented.

I am certain that it was this over-preservation and the Prince expecting the same when he stayed on his friends' estates (which was imitated by the plutocrats in the hope of securing a Royal visitor), until it began to spread like a pestilence, that eventually led to Government interference. With respect to the clauses of the new Act, whilst admitting that legislation had become a regrettable necessity, there was no occasion to repeat the errors of the Irish Land Bill, by sweeping good and bad landlords into one net and punishing the many for the sins of the few. Protection from injury was all that ought to have been asked and conceded, but in their anxiety to make amends for past grievances (which was quite beyond their province), the Government presented the tenants with sporting rights, making it quite possible for the landlord and his friends to be shooting at one end of the farm and the tenant at the other! Sport, be it remembered, is property to be bought and paid for like any other luxury, and farmers can bid for it with the rest of the world, to be granted or refused as the case may be, but to hand it over to them in this fashion, when there were other means of redress, was sheer confiscation, and particularly in these depressed times, when a great part and sometimes the whole of a landlord's income is derived by letting the Hall and

shooting, the value of both being seriously depreciated by this act of spoliation. It is very strange that necessary reforms cannot be accomplished in a judicious manner, and that our lawgivers seem unable to comprehend that two wrongs cannot be made into one right.

The notion that game-preserving is injurious to the labouring class, may be dismissed as the delusion of persons unacquainted with country life. They distinctly benefit by it, and it furnishes them with extra employment, leading up to the coveted post of game-keeper. Sport has always been extremely popular with the villagers, and before the advent of railways, the shooting season was the great event of the year, making a variety in their quiet lives and bringing them into contact with the outer world. The Norfolk peasantry considered themselves keen judges of sport ; and a "furrener from the sheers" could only ingratiate himself in their good opinion by proving a crack shot, when they would condescendingly remark that "He warn't such a fule as he looked, and brought down them birds nearly as well as the squire himself ;" or if he had propitiated them with liberal tips and yet missed his birds, it would be, "He shute wonderful bad, yet he don't seem to want for understandin' neither. I ca'ant meake it eout." To the end of their days they would relate tales of past glories, and be as proud of a few scars, the results of

a little "pepperin'," as a soldier of his wounds. The squires must have shot rather "wild" sometimes, for one keeper used to entertain his audience with the "uncommon bad luck the squire had one season. Fust he shute a by (boy); didn't think so much o' that, give his mother a five pun-note. Sune arter he shute a beater; squire think a deal about that, he du; why, I du assure you, he didn't go out shutin' for a whole week afterwards!"¹

If a few of the population who got in the way were caught now and then, they did not spare one another, and to be minus an eye or an arm was no uncommon thing among the old generation of landlords, and pheasants straying beyond the boundaries led to as many feuds as a contest for the county. A rough climate is apt to develop pugnacious tendencies, and offences were not easily forgotten, and were handed down in feudal fashion. I do not know but what these open and above-board quarrels were more wholesome and preferable than those of the present age, and that the duel and the horsewhip were not superior remedies to the arguing and tedium of law-courts. Our forefathers of all sorts and degrees were not fond of lawyers' bills, and vastly preferred taking it into their own hands, while the Petty and

¹ Written before : the same anecdote appeared in "Temple Bar" by a Norfolk man, and referring to the same game-keeper.

Quarter Sessions and Assizes sufficed for poaching and criminal cases. Now and then they plunged into a Chancery suit as sundry impoverished estates bear witness, and to this day a bramble that eats up the rest of the hedge is called "the lawyer" by the country folks; but actions for libel as at present conducted seem a nineteenth century importation.

Next to setting off with a "southerly wind and a cloudy sky," I know of nothing more invigorating than an old-fashioned "shutin' day," in Norfolk; the crisp air with a spice of salt in it, the gossamer hanging over garden and hedgerows, a slight mist now, but the sun promising to come out presently and light up the gorgeous autumn colouring and the deep blue of the distant strip of sea. The squire and his friends appear in promiscuous-looking garments, well booted and gaitered, for walking all day up and down turnips is as drenching as a pond; the gamekeeper, master of the situation, in the old brown velveteen of strictly professional cut, and the pockets bulging out into the shape and make that none but a keeper could contrive to wear them into; the retrievers wild with excitement, and everyone off at last, all but the keeper waiting to "hallow out" for the third or fourth time to "them boys" where to come with the lunch, "they'll be sure to go wrong if I don't." You are mistaken there, Mr Keeper; those youths are sharp enough where beef and beer are in prospect,

though handy at getting out of the way at other times ; but in village society “them boys” are always supposed to be in the wrong, a proper tribute to the superior wisdom of their elders, and what thorns these little school-board prigs will be to them !

At the sound of the guns, friendly carts and gigs appear from no one knows where—the butcher, baker, and candlestick-maker on their rounds ; and the cheerful little parish doctor suddenly remembers that the nearest road to his patients lies in that direction, is always going every minute, can’t even stop to take a glass of sherry, but staying on and on to see the sport ; and at noon time the rustics will saunter up, the antediluvians on parish pay following at a creeping pace, and lean over the gates, and hover near the luncheon cart. The parson, if he is of a good sociable sort, will be with the shooting party ; and though it may all seem very slow work by comparison with the thousands that fall before the driving and battues, yet every one is satisfied and no one the worse for it, and if our duty to our neighbours is any consideration, that ought to count for something.

But whatever objection may be urged against the wholesale slaughter system, call it unsportsmanlike or what you please, the charge of additional cruelty cannot be justly admitted ; partridges, pheasants, and hares, lead the happiest existence—bountifully fed and enjoy themselves until the day of doom, and then

are quickly dispatched. A bad shot who constantly wounded his birds would not be in great request unless he were a very distinguished personage, and the keepers go round at the end of the day to pick up the stragglers and put them out of misery. In this respect it differs widely from that disgrace to civilisation—pigeon shooting—and it is to be hoped that when the Bill is brought up again, the Lords will think better of it ; for supposing that it is as they fear—the thin end of the wedge leading to the abolition of all field sport—would it not be more worthy of their order to obey the grand old French proverb, *Fais ce que tu dois, advienne ce que pourra*, and take the chance of further encroachments, and resist them should they arise ? And if the revolting butchery had not been patronised by the highest in the land, would not their decision have been different ? and was it quite consistent with *noblesse oblige* to disregard the wishes of the gentle Lady who for once departed from her graceful abstention in public affairs to plead on behalf of suffering and helpless creation ? And what are the Bishops about ? They can assemble fast enough upon their own concerns, but are strangely indifferent to the woes of the poor pigeons, the “doves” of Biblical and typical associations.

The assertion that all sports are cruel is open to as much diversity of opinion as the question of war or peace at any price. One is so afraid of being in the

wrong where animals are concerned, that it is difficult to decide one way or the other. I only know that true, genuine sportsmen are the most humane of mankind ; devoted to their horses, dogs, and children, and that all living things are sure of good treatment at their hands. A great authority is of opinion that if foxes could be consulted about their destiny, they would prefer a short life and a merry one to the total extermination that awaits them if hunting were abolished. I am certain all animals would prefer never to have existed than to perish by trapping ; but with regard to hunting, to see a wily old fox break covert, looking a perfectly fair match for his adversaries, removes all feeling of cruelty ; but I do not like them to be dug out of holes, or pulled from a tree, or routed from any other harbour of refuge, and am not perhaps so disappointed as I ought to be when a gallant old fox lives to run another day.

There is, however, one matter connected with sport to which I should be glad to call attention, and I think upon all these points I may say that I have had considerable experience—that a strict supervision should be exercised by game-preservers as to the manner in which vermin and birds of prey are killed by the under-keepers, and which may be carried on without the owner's knowledge. I will not harrow anyone's sensibilities by describing the horrors of an owl-trap, which ought to be put down at once by the

law of the land. Cats are of no use in a house when they have once taken to poaching, but that is no reason why traps should be baited near villages and houses on purpose to decoy them away ; and the custom of paying keepers for every cat's tail they produce is very reprehensible. I knew of a case where it was cut off the living animal, and am afraid that it is not a solitary instance.

The rural police are not sufficiently alert in summoning for offences under the Act, are perhaps too much mixed up with the population and afraid of giving offence, or may not be over sensitive themselves ; and private persons seldom like to undertake a prosecution upon their own responsibility and get into trouble with a neighbour. It would be an excellent plan if the police were under stringent orders to make it as much their business to search out and prosecute for cruelty as for any other crime ; they must be aware of what goes on upon certain estates, and though farmers are not an inhuman race, yet there are exceptions, and I could name one or two lonely homesteads where habitual cruelty is practised ; but little or no notice is taken, and so a great deal remains unchecked that ought to be exposed and punished.

Traps of a merciful construction have yet to be invented, and I wish a prize were publicly offered to stimulate the discovery, and if successful, no other

permitted to be used. The most humane people are compelled to resort to them sometimes ; rats inside a stack can be got at in no other way, though a great deal may be done to mitigate the evil by careful watching.

Slaughter-houses should be placed under Government inspection, and only one method of killing allowed. I generally took the opportunity of anyone coming round to buy up the calves to attack them about the barbarity that, in spite of all the efforts to put it down, is still too prevalent, and refused to sell them any unless they were to be kept for stock. Firing horses and other operations can be performed under chloroform ; you will have a tussle with the veterinary over it, who thinks it all nonsense, but of course he has to give in to you.

Upon vivisection I can only say I would rather die of the most lingering disease than have any animal mangled to keep me alive.

Of cruelty to children I can hardly bring myself to speak. It was once my painful duty to unearth the most infamous treatment of a forlorn child who had been received as a pupil in a clergyman's family "to educate with their own little boy," and which I only name as a warning to parents and guardians not to be beguiled into a plausibility of that sort.

Of cruelty *by* children, those are to blame who have the rule over them. If boys are taught in the nursery to treat their toy animals with gentleness, and when

they grow older, that cruelty is great as disgrace as telling lies or stealing, they will become models of humanity and take kittens and birds under their protection instead of tormenting them. Parents, particularly in the lower classes, are often grossly neglectful in this respect, and ought to be called to account for it.

I am aware that, upon the whole, England and Englishmen are the most humane country and people in the world, but there is room for improvement, as there must be wherever natural propensities to evil exist, and we are too much disposed to wrap ourselves up in the no-business-of-ours principle, forgetting that children and animals are a sacred trust given to all mankind alike, and that however insignificant we may feel ourselves to be, sometimes only as grains of sand amongst the scurrying multitude, our influence for good or evil is more extensive than we suppose, while the smallest act may affect our fellow-creatures' weal or woe. The societies for the prevention of cruelty have already done a great work, but there is still more for them to do, and their success will very much depend upon the avoidance of that bane of English benevolences—the rushing into extremes, and allowing crotchet-mongers to air their hobbies at their expense, and the resolution to demand nothing unreasonable or that is not consistent with prudence, and that very *un* "common sense."

CHAPTER IX.

THE YEARLY ROUND.

THE next few years after “ me and Wales ” had made it up, at the conclusion of the grand court-martial, were the happiest and most prosperous of my Sandringham life, for which I was indebted to the interposition of my friend Mr Onslow, my “ Knight and Champion,” as one of the Court wags facetiously dubbed him. The Prince became all smiles instead of frowns ; his friends and courtiers who had looked upon me as if I were composed of some combustible material, a species of Guy Fawkes in petticoats, veered round too ; the London lawyer’s compliments mounted into regions of fiction and romance ; I found myself compared to the sun upon one occasion, the moon and stars being quite beneath comparison with my newly-discovered merits ; and as for the little agent, you would think he had been created for the express purpose of studying my interests and making magnificent promises that were never fulfilled. Possibly he may have thought it better for me to live upon great expectations than to have no expectations at all.

There was still too much game, but not in the excess of former years; perhaps that treasonable House of Commons business had scared some of it away! The new head-keeper was peace-making and considerate; in short, a millennium appeared to have set in, and I chanted its advent in a little book of paeans, which was enthusiastically reviewed by the Press, and reverently presented to his Royal Highness, clad in Royal scarlet and "goold."

The farm, at which, undeterred by commotions from without, I had been vigorously working, in hope of better days to come, was rapidly approaching completion, and was noted for its high state of cultivation, even in this far-famed agricultural county. A newspaper reported it to be worth a day's journey to see, and it was honoured by visits from Royal, Grand Ducal and other visitors, and "distinguished agriculturists" from different parts of the kingdom. The various breeds of stock had been gradually improved, in anticipation of entrance for Cattle Show honours, as well as for immediate profit, and in this department the one talent Nature had bestowed upon me—a tolerably correct eye for the points of a horse and other animals—was of infinite service. Everyone has a capacity for something, only the guides of our youth persist in ignoring this fact, and cram us all round after one stereotyped prescription, when our abilities may lie in an exactly opposite direction.

Occasional visitors and old friends were always welcome: but I was obliged to put a little check upon the troop of outsiders, who, if you have the remotest connection with Royalty, come buzzing about at all times and seasons, whereas if you lived elsewhere they would ignore your existence; and I believe I often gave offence when their raids upon my valuable time were but coldly received. They made a perfect victim of poor Mr Onslow, who did not like to refuse anything to anybody; rampant females and even parties of excursionists appearing from all quarters, and often a great part of his day was spent in personally conducting them round Sandringham, while the more he took the more he had to take in ever-increasing numbers.

Excepting in hay or harvest, or in cases of illness with the stock, I generally contrived to be at home for five o'clock tea, which fell conveniently between coming in from the land and milking time, and the last look round the yards. In the summer, when friends were invited and expected, it was set out with the old blue Worcester tea-service, and home-made bread and cakes, and cream that came tumbling out of the jug in "dollops." A curtain of vines hanging over the bay windows instead of blinds, and the munching of the cows and sheep outside, with that subdued crisp sound, and the soft lowing and baa-ing only heard on a hot afternoon and on Sundays, made

them think that my life must be one unbroken bliss, and it used to be, "How I should like to have a farm!" "How delightful it must be to lead a life like this!" I don't know whether they would have liked it "all round," for they must soon have found out it was not all cakes and cream; but I would not have led any other for the world, or exchanged it for the highest position that could have been offered me; while the *bona-fide* farm "worrits" were bearable in the average course of things, and had nothing of the petty galling nature about them that embitters so many women's lives. Cattle diseases, strikes, free trade, and other "burning questions" you share with the rest of the agricultural world, and have a wide horizon for your cares, instead of a narrow, carking one. And supposing I were a little overworked and overdone sometimes out of doors, all was rest and peace within. The housekeeping had been handed over to the nurse, and whilst other servants came and went, wanting a "change," she stayed on for ever, and would do anything for us; the governess wrote the letters and did the flowers and refinements; and lastly, the child completed the party. I indeed grudged the days as they passed, for when you have had one break-up in your life, you become nervous over any subsequent happiness and afraid it cannot last.

I never wanted to go away. If obliged now and then to take an entire rest, I was homesick and in a

fidget to get back the whole time, and thought there was nothing in the world so beautiful as Appleton, when I turned the corner of the hill and looked down upon it in the valley beneath, quite impatient for the welcome at the front door; and that would be reflected from every bit of furniture rubbed up and renovated in my absence, in the fresh muslin curtains and flowers in my room, the dogs almost tearing me down, and the greetings of the rest of the animals on my rounds. It was worth going away for the pleasure of returning.

Then there was the endless variety of ~~farm~~ life, for each season brings its excitement and change of occupation. In a country house people get bored when the hunting and winter visiting is over, and find the east winds, and waiting for the summer, that "sets in with its usual severity," long and trying, and want to be off to London or abroad for a change; but on a farm the spring is the most important time; heaps of work crowding in together, seed sowing and lambing time in one. A flock is so profitable that you must put up with the trouble; but imagine between five and six hundred lambs arriving in quick succession, and the previous care and watching, for the ewes must not eat this or that, or be turned upon land that disagrees—one part of a field will disagree with them and the rest be perfectly healthy—and your shepherd, if he is

worth anything and attached to his charge, will be the very plague of your life, for if anything goes wrong he declares it is because "his ewes" (he never condescends to call them "yours"), "worn't allowed to have that there bit of 'olland or new-ley" * that would just a suited 'em, or that there stack of hay." Shepherds always seem to grudge the other animals everything they eat, whether the sheep want it or not, and would like to roam all over the place, and on to your neighbours' as well, and then would not be satisfied. When you shut up a piece of hay they are hankering after it all the time, and if you are weak enough to give in, and run short at lambing time, they will declare "they could a done without it, and a pretty predicament we're in now!" I suppose the restlessness of the sheep is infectious, and to decide how far you should give in or hold out is one of the most difficult tasks you have.

The conversion of upland heaths and sheep walks into arable land at the time when corn was at war prices, is a great drawback to the healthiness of the flock; in their present artificial state they are more subject to disease and accidents from frights and noises. Guns and dogs are a particular danger. I shut them up on shooting days; but once or twice they came unexpectedly, with serious consequences, and one winter dire havoc was wrought by a pack of

* "New-ley," provincial term for the first year's clover.

harriers running in among them ; but with these exceptions, and taking one year with another, I had a fair number of lambs, and the quality excellent—the dark-faced ewes being a leading feature on the place. It was a great relief when the last ewe and her progeny walked out of the lambing-yard—a nursery that is fitted up in a sheltered place—and the shepherd, who is encamped for the time in a movable house on wheels, goes back to his cottage, and washes and shaves, an operation that it is a superstition with the old-fashioned ones not to perform during the camping-out.

Sowing the spring crops is of equal importance, though not so risky and distracting. The cultivation of barley comes by intuition to the Norfolkers, and, with the fear of Bass & Allsop before them, who will have a perfect sample or go elsewhere, they have become masters of the art, in which they may be equalled but not surpassed. You know that the land must be highly pulverised, but not too highly manured, or the "cróp will "lodge,"—that if sown too soon the frost will catch it, or if too late it will not "tiller ;" you welcome the biting wind that chills you to the bone, for does it not produce the "peck of dust worth a king's ransom ?" You would be glad to keep on sowing day and night if you could, for every hour is of consequence ; you must have relays of horses and keep the drill going all through

the noon-time; and the extra wages are worth paying, for if you do not seize the chance when it comes, you may not get it again that year.

Oats are much easier to grow, but quite a secondary consideration; they are put in either before or after barley, when there is a break in the favourable weather.

After barley and oats come mangolds and turnips, and when everything is up, there is the excitement and interest in seeing them grow and watching the effect of different manures and soils. In summer the "haysel" is the great occupation, and then the "turnip-hoeing" and "scouring," and so on till harvest.

From May to October the stocks are shifted backwards and forwards to the marshes, a long strip of land that makes a ribbon border to the coast, and slices of it are parcelled out among the upland corn farms where grass is scarce. They are wild, dreary-looking flats when you are down upon them, with broad dykes for drainage, and banks for keeping out the tide and defining the boundaries. A haystack looks colossal, a figure walking on the bank a giant, and a bullock standing out against the sky, Brobdingnagian; while that "low leaden line beyond" is the Wash, and that "savage lair" in the distance is the German Ocean, and there is a weird picturesqueness and queer sounds and echoes that you see and hear nowhere else. The autumn skies and sunsets are

magnificent. Nature is full of compensations, and if you want scenery in the Eastern Counties, you must look up instead of down, where with a little imagination you will discover Alpine peaks and mountains and Turneresque colouring to your heart's content. Creeks ending in miniature harbours wind in and out of the marshes, and wherever there is a creek there you will find a village; but who built those cathedral-sized churches, and where the population came from who attended them, I leave to the archæologists to explain. The villages were noted smuggling resorts, and you may still see lonesome public-houses and out-lying farm premises suspiciously near the harbours, where the horses would be found in the early morning reeking from some midnight expedition and no questions asked; and there may be one or two prosperous farmers of whom you will hear that "they made their money in them smuggling times," or "they broke up a rare smuggling lot on his place once upon a time, but he'd taken good care of hisself afore it were found out."

The snipe shooting must have been splendid before the drainage and enclosures, and there is still a good deal of wild fowl on a sort of No Man's Land beyond the marshes, where a few squatters have established themselves; and in the villages along the coast there are generally one or two amphibious-looking natives, owners of a boat and gun, and who, like the Fenmen

of old, are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, or all in one, and it is wonderful how they manage to get a living out of these God-forgotten wastes. Harbour-master Pooley, as he was facetiously called, was the presiding aborigine of Wolferton Creek, where my slice of marsh lay, and a well-known character for miles round, and his wild ducks and shrimps were in great request. He was proud of relating his first interview with the Prince, who, of course, knew who he was and all about him, and said the appropriate thing, as he always does.

“I see him a-comin’, so I drew up and giv’ him the pass. ‘Pooley,’ says he, ‘hey yer got any wild ducks to-day?’ ‘No, yer R’yal Highness,’ says I, ‘I ain’t.’ ‘I’m sorry for that, Pooley,’ says he, ‘for if yer had, I’d a bought some on yer.’”

A few years ago he was summoned as a witness to give evidence for the Prince and other landlords in one of those eternal squabbles that are always going on over the ownership of land reclaimed from the sea, for who but himself knew every inch of the disputed territory, and where the sea used to go, and every drain, dyke, and sluice that had been dug or raised! Who conveyed him up to London, and how he comported himself under cross-examination, I never heard, but am sure his evidence would be unshakable and to the point. He was quartered at some tavern, and thinking he might as well walk out to “see the teown afore he went back,” asked the landlord (I believe) to

take him, as he “dussn’t” go alone. Nor was he much easier in his mind under the escort of a “furener and a Londoner and not knownen what sort of a chap he were. So I took keount (count) o’ the streets as I went along, till at last I loose my reckonin’, and then I stop a pellissemen and give him in charge. I thought it were safer.” The policeman happened to know his conductor, who might otherwise have been committed for inveigling a countryman into a den of thieves, and Pooley was quite satisfied with the explanation, though it could hardly have conduced to good fellowship for the remainder of his stay.

The poor Harbour-master came to a sad and untimely end. His favourite punt-gun, “such confidence he had in ‘she,’” turned traitor at last and made short work of him one day, to the regret of all who knew him. He lies buried in Wolferton Church-yard, within sight and sound of his beloved haunts, and it is a pity he could not know of the tribute to his memory in the *Field*, written by a gentleman whose yacht was often moored for months together in the creek for the wild winter shooting, and which the Rector suggested would be an appropriate inscription for his tombstone.

I liked the marsh work very much; it was all stock and no ploughing and crops. One way to it was across the heather and round Wolferton Wood,

which is not a plantation, like most of the woods about, but the remains of an ancient forest, and noted for its wild beds of lilies of the valley, that find an honoured place in the Princess's boudoir at Marlborough House. The quickest way back was through the village, and after being for hours on the marshes, looking after and sorting horses, bullocks and sheep, when even in summer the evenings are chilly, a cup of tea at Wolferton Rectory was very acceptable, and a talk with dear old Mrs —, the Rector's wife, niece and next of kin to Clarkson, the great philanthropist, who had inherited his kindly nature. Her good deeds, which were many and extended far beyond the parish boundaries, were done in secret; no fuss or parade or using almsgiving as a stepping-stone to society, or for praise and compliments in high places; she was content to be comparatively unnoticed by the great world; but if there is any truth in our Grand Old Book of Reference, she will have her reward.

In October the young horses and bullocks were brought back from marsh and settled in their winter quarters. The working teams were always at home, but never allowed to be stabled excepting for grooming and feeding: in summer they were turned out to grass at night; and in the winter into well-littered yards, which makes them less liable to chills than if brought straight out of a steaming stable.

I had some handsome teams, nearly all bred on the place, but I cannot say much for my private stud. I am as fond of a "bit of blood" as anyone, and now and then would pick up something good and break it in, but when you are riding and driving about all day in cold and slush, and have to tie them up at gates and wait about, you do not want the anxiety of "driving behind too much money," and as long as they could go, it did not matter what sort of screws they were. The trap I drove about in, "Agricultural Distress," had not its equal in the country-side. It had been patched and mended by local talent until there was hardly any of the original structure left. Sometimes a wheel would fly off, or a shaft snap in two; once it collapsed through the bottom coming out, and when too rotten to hold a nail, was tied up with rope. The harness was not so bad, for my screws were not always of the quietest, and had there been time for broken bones, I might have had a plentiful crop. When they were too obstreperous, I steered into the nearest ploughed field, which soon took it out of them. For Sundays and great occasions I had the brougham, and dressed myself like other people, and felt quite respectable.

The forward bullocks were picked out early in the winter, for fattening in the boxes: they get on so much better under cover and in separate compartments where they cannot prod one another or fight

over the food. There was a pathway between the boxes with bullocks on each side, and roofed overhead, a sort of Burlington Arcade, only much more interesting, and a splendid place for walking up and down in the winter, or for a Sunday afternoon lounge, and not at all cold, if you liked to sit down on a heap of straw with the bullocks all round. Beyond the boxes and opening into them were the turnip and chaff, engine, meal, and cake houses. The cake was generally bought by contract in the summer, when it was cheaper, to be delivered as back carriage for the corn, and stored in a chamber over the lower house and opposite the hay loft. We had fixed up some very useful machinery which turned two small mills for cake and meal on one side, and cut the straw and hay into chaff on the other, which fell through troughs into their respective compartments below, were mixed together and given to the bullocks with sliced turnips, representing meat, bread, and vegetables. The cake was weighed off for each lot, and the allowance for the sheep put up in sacks, ready for the shepherd to cart up to the farm.

Sometimes four to five hundred sheep were fatting at once, which, with the bullocks, ewes, and lambs, and a handful for the young stock, made the cake and meal bill mount up into the four figures. I regulated the quantity for each lot, and when it was to be increased, I checked it off against the cake in store.

The yardman weighed it out, besides feeding the home stock, milking, bringing up calves, poultry, pigs and sundry other work, with the necessary assistance. It was a very important post, and I think I had the best man in the country, who stayed with me till the last, for not being able to read or write, his thoughts were concentrated on his work ; and he was so kind and clever with the animals, did not mind what trouble he took, or how often he sat up at night, when there was anything the matter. "Trusty" Trundle I might have called him, for he was a faithful servant from beginning to end.

The steward helped in the yards if wanted, but had quite enough to do on the land, whilst I preferred keeping the management of the stock entirely in my own hands.

CHAPTER X.

THE DAILY ROUND.

THE days of the week brought as much change as the seasons, no two being exactly alike. If the work is arranged over-night and planned for "wet or dry," and the steward dependable, it is not necessary to be up every morning at unearthly hours. You catch the stragglers better by absenting yourself for a time and coming down upon them when they think you have given up early rising, and then of course it is the "fust time it ever happened," and "onlucky the missus should be out that werry morning."

It is as well not to overtire yourself when there is no particular occasion for it, as you never know when your work is done, and that you may not have to be up all night with the stock; for with 1200 or 1300 of them in the place, some illness or accident is constantly happening. I often came in drenched through, and after changing my things and thinking I had finished for the day, would have to be out again for hours. When anything serious was the matter, the yardmen sat up with them, and I went in and out

to see how they were getting on ; and on a summer or frosty winter night, the moon was so beautiful, shining over the old ruined church and tower as I walked in the intense stillness and through long shadows to the cattle sheds or stables ! Sometimes a press of work and catastrophes would crowd in all at once, and the following is a specimen of one of the casualty days :—

Five o'clock—looked out to see if it would be fine enough for haymaking later on. Six—talked over the hay with the steward and went round the yards. Seven—in the milking-sheds, came in for a time and dressed for riding. Eight—rode round with the steward inspecting everything. Ten—had breakfast and was comfortably settled to the "Times," when Trundle came up to say a cow " warn't right." Went out at once and stayed a long time watching and attending to her, and finding it likely to be a serious case of fever, sent for the veterinary. Spent a great part of the afternoon with the invalid, and also in the hayfield and sundries. Towards evening the cow became much worse, dashing herself about, would have been delirious had she been a human being, and another man had to be called in to help. One of the other cows became indisposed during the scrimmage, and after taking disinfecting precautions, was obliged to spare Trundle to see after her ; she, however, did very well. Ordered supper for the men and something for them to eat in the night, and had a quantity

of gruel made for the cow. Settled the work for the next day with the steward, and back again to the hospital, and after impressing upon Trundle that he was to come and "hallow out" under my windows if there was a change for the worse, fell into the sleep not of the faithful but of the exhausted. The cow recovered, but it was the worst case I ever attended. The remedies were sedative medicines, whisky gruel, mustard rubbed down the spine, and the head constantly bathed with the coldest water, and, a favourite prescription of mine, that hardly ever failed to give relief—a blanket dipped in water as hot as they could bear it wrapped round them, and one or two rugs or blankets over it to keep the steam in.

On Monday morning the dealers were on their rounds, and there was generally something to sell in a large or small way. After the North-country buyers began to frequent Lynn Market, and good auctions and salesmen were established, I sent the best lots there to be sold, glad to get rid of the bargaining at home, higgling half the morning over sixpences, but as sixpence a head in selling two hundred sheep would be £5, you must stand out for it, and not think about the trouble. Tuesday was market day, and then nearly all the countryside, gentle and simple, flocked in to Lynn for business, gossip, and shopping, and in place of the silence that reigns in the old town during the week, the pavement is blocked with people

chattering in broad Norfolk, and relating the last news and grievances with an "I says and she or he says," and "I says, says I." The county people and clergy who happen to come in are generally invited to luncheon at the Bank, and the rest of the community attend the market ordinaries of various grades and prices.

These Banks are a very old Norfolk institution, and different to anything of the kind in the kingdom. Founded originally by a well-known and powerful family of Quakers, they have gradually spread over the *corner* county until there is hardly a town of any importance without a branch establishment located there. The partners of the last generation kept to the faith of their fathers, and with the peculiar dress and phraseology of their creed, formed a distinct colony in the neighbourhood of Norwich, and were noted for the astuteness and skill, in amassing enormous wealth, which seems to be a second nature to the descendants of a persecuted race. It is said that the Rothschild of that day declared that his contemporary, the head of the Quaker firm, was more than a match for two Jews, and that if they were shut up together over-night, the Jews would be gone before morning, but his "Friend" —left alive. The calmness, self-restraint, and power of gauging the weaknesses of their fellow-men without a sign of betrayal, or perhaps contriving to convey the impression that *they* were the weaker vessel, gave

them an immense advantage in their intercourse with the outer world; neither were they above "stooping to conquer" and sacrificing pride, temper, or any other "besetment" for the purpose of gaining the object in view, which consequently they rarely failed to obtain; and I have always thought that the versatility and other prominent characteristics of the late Bishop Wilberforce, which have been rather severely commented upon in recent reviews, arose from his early intercourse and intimacy with these remarkable people.

But if keener in the pursuit of wealth than was consistent with their religious professions, they spent it with no ungrudging hand: if it were deemed no crime to outwit the Hebrew at a bargain, they did not exact the pound of flesh from the poor and needy, and their bank books might testify to many a score crossed out, to be entered into another account, where we may all be glad to find ourselves in as good a place on a certain Day; and the eminent philanthropist who issued from their ranks, long before philanthropy became a fashionable trade and amusement, was no solitary exception, but an illustration of the benevolence and liberality that they carried into every relation of life. Cultivated and refined and greatly given to hospitality, they formed an important element in the very pleasant society for which Norwich was noted in the days of Bishop Stanley, Mrs

Opie, and others, and so fascinated was that little lady with her Quaker friends, that she ended by joining their communion and becoming a leading member of the fraternity. A vein of humour helped to relieve the inclination to wearisome sanctimoniousness, and among the many anecdotes related of them is one of the head of the house sallying forth to remonstrate with a young officer from Norwich, who boasted he would get a rise out of the Quaker, by shooting up and down his plantations without leave—a liberty beyond the toleration even of that much-enduring race.

“Now, I put it to thee, friend, if thee found anyone trespassing in thy plantations, what would thee say ?”

“Say ?—well, I should say, ‘Come in and have some lunch.’”

“And so thee shall,” said the forgiving Quaker, and not only entertained him royally, but gave him leave to disport himself wherever he pleased upon his property for the rest of the day, and no doubt this exquisite courtesy effectually stopped any future raids on the part of the trespasser and his brother officers ; whereas, had he been driven off with threats and invectives, it would probably have been a standing diversion for successive generations of regiments.

One member of the firm possessed a greater talent for epigram than accorded with their usual prudence and caution, and could not resist indulging in it at

his neighbour's expense. The notorious Lord —— who, like the pirates and freebooters of old, had built an expiatory church, found the following lines posted up one day—

“ In pious as in impious deeds,
Like water finds his level,
And having cheated all his neighbours
He built this Church to cheat the Devil.”

His lordship was furious, and every inquiry was set on foot to discover the offender, who naturally was not forthcoming, until the Quaker facetiously enlightened him as to the real culprit; but it not being convenient for the owner of deeply-mortgaged estates to quarrel with the great banker, the offence had to be swallowed with as good a grace as could be assumed.

The little weaknesses and tendency to cant possessed by some of his relatives of the persuasion, furnished many a theme for his wit and satire, and especially did he repudiate as an apocryphal legend their claim to be the lineal descendants of a powerful Norman Baron of the name, who possessed a goodly share of Norfolk manors and fiefs in the days of yore, whose race was supposed to be extinct and their lands to have passed to others. It was a curious anomaly for the peaceful Friends to be anxious to “cast back” from a grim and warlike progenitor so totally at variance with their unique setting and traditions; I prefer to think of them as tracing from some gentle-

blooded Puritan ancestry of the Bridgenorth stamp, who fought not for rapine and plunder, but for their country (though not for their King), in the old wars of the Commonwealth.

Their descendants have increased and multiplied, married and intermarried with the leading families in the neighbourhood, emancipated themselves from the yoke, and appear to enjoy the vanities of the world with greater zest from its having been the forbidden fruit of their early years. Sometimes you will see a fair face that you long to divest of modern adornments and enshrine in spotless kerchief and cap, and upon closer intimacy certain peculiarities will remind you that they are not yet altogether as others are; but with the abandonment of the outward and visible signs of their creed, all distinctive traces will eventually pass away, and this once celebrated colony as representatives of Quakerism cease to exist.

I did not drive in for the Bank luncheons every Tuesday, though enjoying a business excuse for an outing and gossip, or a certain section of my labourers would have turned it into a pilfering and loitering day. One Tuesday, when they thought I was safely off to Lynn, I found a man helping himself to the engine coals, and so busy filling his sack, that until he turned round to hoist it on his shoulder, he did not discover I had been watching him all the time. This petty thieving is a great nuisance, both to oneself

and the honest ones, who don't like to see it and don't like to tell, and there are so many things on a farm that cannot be always put away. They would not commit a burglary or any great robbery, but will lay hands on odds and ends of "portable property," and if they keep pigs and poultry, you may find that they are fattened at your expense, and certain carts along the highroad are very handy for popping things in and delivering them at convenient seasons. It is very odd if you find them out, like my friend with the coals; they like you better and have a greater respect for you than if you are taken in by them; not that they consider it a very grave offence; "getting into trouble" is their word for being caught in abstracting your goods and chattels, in the same style that the contraband village babies are called "misfortunes;" while if you buy a new lock or keep an extra watch and tell them it is because they are all so "honest" or so "partial to your property," they are not particularly abashed, though it may be a little check upon them in the future. It would be very pleasant if we could go through life without bolts and bars, locks and keys, on the universal confidence system; but as that can never be on this side of "Kingdom come," we must put up with occasional breaches of the Decalogue as our inevitable destiny.

The rest of the week was passed in sundry occupa-

tions, and always plenty to do. Of course I found time for the child, who was soon able to ride about with me and to career in the hunting field at a very early period. His life was a paradise, with a pony like a Landseer, dogs, birds, kittens, and every imaginable pet, and birthday trees and treats. He was a great favourite with the village people and everyone round ; and the only shadow in the distance, for me, at least, was the dreadful separation for school, which must come in time, and then, with the exception of the holidays, I should be quite alone for the greater part of the year.

The evenings were the most solitary time, though my favourite room was a very cheerful one, both in summer and winter. The furniture arrangements were rather promiscuous ; pictures, engravings, and old china intermixed with prize-cattle cards, and books of fiction and poetry, with rows of the *Royal Agricultural Journal*, and other farm literature ; samples of extra quality of wheat and barley in china saucers, and pieces of oil cake on approval (on a Royal estate you are deluged with specimens of all sorts), and other miscellaneous articles. One winter I tried music in the evening, but it sounded so uncanny and eerie with empty rooms beyond, that I gave it up, and studied veterinary surgery and agricultural chemistry instead, while the accounts took a long time, for the pages would not add up twice alike

and had to be gone over again. With good fires and plenty of light it was never dull. I don't think solitude ever is. The real trial in life is an uncongenial, or "nagging" relative or companion, and that I took care to avoid, thinking, with Solomon, that "the wilderness and the housetop" was preferable. Visits from young people were far more acceptable, and schoolboys for the holidays, provided they returned to their friends with the proper complement of limbs, a very great treat; and once a Scotch kinswoman of my husband's, the well-known lady traveller, Miss G— C—, appeared on her rounds to enliven me with a visit and declare she delighted in it all, and found it less like civilisation than anything she had met with since returning from the Himalayan fastnesses.

When the wind howled and tattered round the house as if there were eight corners of the compass instead of four, I had to listen and be on my guard; for the front door was such a very weak one, opening down the middle with a lock that never went right; and the hurricane blew it open sometimes, and swept down the passage and halls as if a troop of people had rushed in, and the servants were quite at the other end of the house, so I was cut off from all assistance. For this reason, I was obliged to make a stir when the village lunatic took a fancy to break in; and as he was very powerful and dangerous at times,

and the evening before had only been kept at bay by threatening to shoot him, I sent for his son-in-law, where he lodged, to insist upon his being kept at home. He agreed that he "hadn't ought to be prowling about, but the trewth were he were made up o' notten but wickedness, and had been that troublesome they was obliged to turn him out o' doors." The "that troublesome" consisted in his having concealed a pitchfork in the house and suddenly attacking the family with it! It seemed nobody's place to send him to an asylum, and if I had taken upon myself to do it, his relatives might have turned round and declared he was as quiet as a lamb. At last he took up his abode in a hole he had burrowed on the heath, and furnished it with a boiler and saucepan from a neighbour's kitchen. There was a grand hue and cry at this—abstracting one another's goods being quite a different thing to taking a fancy to mine; and the policeman being called in, he was removed to where he ought to have been sent long before, and fortunate that it ended without a throat-cutting tragedy.

At the time of the first Fenian raids there was some danger, for they had detectives lodging in the village, and other precautions at Sandringham, and though I was not of importance enough to be blown up, my house being Royal property might have proved an inducement. From the village people

there was nothing to fear, until the Trades' Union agitators came round, and burglars were shy of coming into a neighbourhood where Royal policemen were in dangerous proximity.

There were two cottages on the place not very far from the house, and in the field beyond was a home-stead where lived the "Last of the Norfolk Farmers," who for a time had given up his own farm to his son, and undertaken to carry on the one next to mine on an adjoining estate until the end of the lease, to my very great benefit, he good-naturedly coming across to help in all emergencies, and giving most valuable lessons from his noted experience, until he began to treat me as an agricultural pupil and "blow me up" for mistakes.

"Whatever ere you after in that there field?" and upon explanation, "That's all right, I were just a goin' to give it yer."

His "giving" generally took the form of rich cakes and fruit for G—, sent up in baskets with the whitest of cloths, and polite little three-cornered notes, in beautiful Norfolk, to request the acceptance, etc. ; and when riding round his farm he said he "could see us, and when we was ridden round we could see him." I do not know if we were worth looking at, but am sure he was, for he was a sight to behold, setting off on market day with his housekeeper in a high vehicle of ancient build, and costume to match, beaver hat with

broad buckle and band, wide expanse of shirt front and frills, ponderous chain and seal and spotless top-boots, being the prominent features.

He was a travelled man, too, and had been to Rome, but was rather reticent over that part of his life, and I think would have preferred to boast that he had never been out of Norfolk. The new style of estate management was not at all to his liking, having been accustomed at a former period to transact business with the "Barrownite" or "Squire" himself, or some member of the family. And I remember a ludicrous squabble over a bell, and his writing in wrath to the office to say "he were thankful he'd never robbed the landlord of the smallest coin of the realm, much less steal a bell, and if he'd done such a thing at his time of life, he'd deserve to have it hung round his neck to the end of his days, with a great big placard to say how he come by it."

"What answer did you get to your letter, Mr ——?"

"Oh, honey and butter's notten to it; nobody like me now; don't know where I shall have to go to one day; heaven ain't good enough for me, that's certain."

I do not always think old people and things are best, but am sure they were more honourable then than now, and that you might have trusted that old man through anything, without waking up to find it a mistake. Before he left, I sent a book that I thought he would like, as a remembrance of his con-

tinued kindness to us, and having written an inscription on the title-page, had not followed his well-mannered example of a three-cornered note. It was returned about a fortnight afterwards, and I was afraid I had offended him by sending him a present. He had seen some "writen at the beginnen, but it were no business o' his to pry into it," and had actually read the book all through without looking back, returning it under the impression that it was a loan.

It is worth going any distance now to have a chat with his daughter, a worthy descendant of her father, who declares she is the last real farmer's wife in the county, and has no patience with the "frames and frimmicks" (airs and graces) of her neighbours, to whom she speaks her mind with home thrusts not always acceptable.

Sunday was a real day of rest, and you must lead a working life to know what that is. In the summer months we spent the afternoon and had the nursery tea in a shady corner of the nut-walk, with the dogs lying about, and everything so reposeful and different to other days, the animals knowing it and feeling it as well as ourselves; and though Trundle was obliged to come up for feeding and milking, he had a semi-Sunday costume, and looked like Sunday too, while there was a public footpath near the garden across the little piece of park left from the Paston Domain, a favourite

walk in the evening for the labourers with their wives and children.

When the winter set in I had a class for the boys who worked on the farm, G. —— helping to teach them ; and I suppose they liked it, or they would not have walked down from the village through slush or snow, and no constraint was put upon them to come, and they had nothing but a piece of bread and cheese before they went home ; even the under-gamekeeper's boys asked leave to join it, though they lived a long way off. Most of them had learned something before, but one or two were in a state of deplorable heathenism, had never heard of Noah and the Ark, or Joseph and his Brethren, and looked as if I had just discovered the facts for their amusement. And there was the usual sharp, forward boy who wants to answer all the questions and let none of the others speak ; and the shy, quiet boy, who knows quite as much or more, only it has to be dragged out of him ; the Morning Chronicle boy who is burning to tell you the news of the village ; and the Ranter boy whose only notion of religion is “fire and brimstone, please ma'am.” They behaved very well, took it as a company-mannered occasion, and reserved their troublesome ways for the farm ; but even there I liked the “them boys” element. They were grumbled at or scolded in turn, but that kept them going like bells to harness, and they made a cheerful, homelike feeling on the estab-

lishment. After G. —— went to school, they looked forward to the holidays as the treat of the year ; and we got up a cricket team of all ages and sizes (for besides the amusement, it is such a good way of teaching them fair-play and honour), and wound up with a supper at the end of the time. The boy who had been promoted to help G. —— and his friends with the fishing and ratting, and a share of their out-of-door luncheons, looking rather disconsolate at his fun being over for the season.

With this new education craze I suppose another race of juveniles will be turned out, destitute of manners, religion, and no respecters of persons, and pretty useless they will be for agricultural purposes, shut up in those hot school-rooms for years, and idling about the village between times, their brains crammed with all sorts of rubbish, rendering them mentally and physically unfit for their work : they will not know a plant from a weed, and be tumbling off horses and stacks, and prodding one another with the forks, and cutting their legs to pieces with scythes, which cannot be learned " how not to do " upon scientific principles, but only by practice and experience. Nine or ten years old is the latest at which they ought to make a beginning ; they can pick up quite enough book learning by that time, and keep it up at the evening school, and religion on Sundays.

It is so very strange that when such total dissimi-

larity exists between town and country, and that what is good for the one is unsuited to the other, the same laws should be enforced upon both communities, and no trouble taken to adapt them to such opposing conditions. High education may be necessary for mechanics and artisans, of that I am no judge ; but the sooner the labourer forgets all he has learned, and uses his eyes and senses out of doors, the better. The old dame schools were all sufficient, the "Nationals" a mistake, and the "Boards" are a nuisance. If, as I have heard, they have been established with the view of preparing them for emigration to the towns and elsewhere, or to develop some hidden genius, it seems hard that country ratepayers should be called upon to pay to their own injury, and should have thought that the real and proper object of education consisted in training children for the position they will probably occupy in life, and not for an imaginary and speculative one ; and the geniuses may safely be left to rise by their own unassisted efforts, as they always have done and always will do, with or without schools and education, and no occasion to shove the whole population upstairs at our expense, for the sake of the few who can march up on their own account.

I am sure the Squires soon forgot the modicum of learning picked up at public schools and college, and neither their grammar nor spelling would have passed

through a “standard,” while some of the most competent bailiffs and stewards could neither read nor write, their heads being all the clearer for it.

Whenever the illiterate got hold of any great words in those days, they were so proud of the distinction that they “trotted them out,” “promiscuous like.” A worthy Mayor who considered the promotion an ample reward for a life of industry and self-denial, after delivering his maiden speech, turned to the proud and happy partner of his honours : “ And now, my dare, looking back into futurity, hew’d a thought that yew and I ud ever have derived to sich an elevation ; ” and in later years a lady who had written a few essays on country subjects was complimented by one of her readers who “ were right proud on’t, there *was* words in them books, no one out o’ Norfolk could ever o’ heerd on ‘em.” Both in and out of Norfolk we shall hear plenty of fine words in the future, but all individuality and originality will be swept into the education bin.

CHAPTER XI.

SANDRINGHAM CHURCH—CONGREGATION— SUNDAY VISITORS.

THE grand event of the week during the Sandringham season was to see my “Royal mistress” and her children in church. I do not think I am quite sane upon that subject, and therefore hardly competent to write about it. It never occurs to me that she is a woman at all, but some exquisite little being wafted straight from fairyland, to say and to do the kindest and prettiest things all the days of her life, and never, never to grow old and ugly, and be wafted back again some day from whence she came. To see her for once only under that painted window, with the glory from it reflected on her, would be a “joy for ever,” and to think that I had that privilege Sunday after Sunday for months together ! And there was Prince “Eddy,” grave and quiet, and looking as if the responsibility of eldership had already begun to weigh upon him ; and Prince George, ready for any fun and mischief as soon as the service was over, and up to a few little tricks even there ; then those three dear

little Princesses, like everybody else's little girls, only so much simpler and nicer, and all crowding round their mother as if there was nobody like her in the world. One morning they were all smiling at the Princess Victoria, when the hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains" was given out. It was not a missionary day, but she had learned and repeated it so well in the week that Mr Onslow promised her it should be sung the next Sunday for a reward.

Sandringham Church has been considerably altered by the new Rector ; the homely country element has disappeared, and the services are conducted in correct London style ; but I think the Princess will never quite forget the simplicity of those early days, and her "dear good friend" as she called the Rector, who worshipped her with an old-world reverence, and pronounced her name in the service as if it were something between heaven and earth, and almost too sacred for mortal voice to utter.

The Prince looked rather bored at the services, and glad when they were over ; which is better than being hypocritical and singing the Psalms in a loud voice, and appearing to be very devout when you are not.

The society people staying in the house for the balls and shooting generally left on Saturday, though they sometimes stayed till Monday and came to church. The *bona fide* Sunday visitors who came from Saturday till Monday or Tuesday were of a

more sedate character. Prime Ministers, leading politicians, naval and military heroes, distinguished travellers, authors, and the popular preachers of the day—the Bishops of Oxford and Peterborough, Dean Stanley, Canon Kingsley, and others ; and it was a great boon in a country neighbourhood to have the opportunity of hearing these clerical luminaries. Dean Stanley struck me as the most impressive, with his mild thoughtful face and composed utterances ; an ideal type of the gentleman scholar, far removed from pedantry or any other affectation or conceit. His Lordship of Oxford was a little too theatrical and mannerly, and in private society I was unable to discover the fascination with which he was credited. Perhaps you felt that perfect sincerity was wanting, but there was no hand of steel under the velvet glove ; he did good and not evil all the days of his life, so let that one fault lie gently on his memory. And now we are to be feasted with a grand flow of oratory, for it is the Bishop of Peterborough's turn to-day, the possessor of that divine gift, which, like a tenor voice, and the *feu sacré* of the artist is so rarely bestowed, and you are carried away with it at the time, though it may not leave the same lasting impression that a more dispassionate discourse would have done.

Then comes Canon Kingsley. But what do we hear ? Can this be our old friend "Parson Lot," the Chartist's champion, denouncing "these frightfully

disloyal and revolutionary days" with a vehemence and energy that might have proceeded from Laud in the reign of King Charles? Have you turned courtier? Impossible! You who are so brave and fearless that when the Prince took you to see the shooting in Wolferton Wood, and the "merry brown hares" came down in legions, you withstood him to the face and told him how wrong it was. No, you are still unchanged, but you have had the pleasantest visit in the pleasantest house in the world, and have seen nothing to rebuke in your old pupil this time, while the children have made much of you in the schoolroom, and the "little lady" who, as Bernal Osborne remarks, "keeps the throne for her husband," has been all smiles and graciousness, and you feel that no one but a brute could wish to upset the monarchy; and with your usual impulsiveness you are pulverising the very notion of such a thing, but equally ready to rise up and protest against any injustice that may come across your path, let the author and doer be Prince, peer, or peasant.

Another well-known preacher deservedly held in high estimation in a London parish, scarcely did himself justice at Sandringham, so very voluble, "tew much o' the ranter," as one of the congregation remarked after church. He did not exactly preach of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come—that would hardly be admissible in the Royal pre-

sence ; but the Prince and his friends thought they had better be careful during his visit ; and not being quite sure what he would say or do, before retiring to the bowling alley on Sunday night, he was decoyed up to bed. But the next morning what must a stupid man do but begin at him with “I say, you *were* a lucky fellow to get off last night ; they pinned me down there till four o’clock this morning ;” but no harm came of it, while the excitability he manifested may have been owing to nervousness. I believe it was a most trying ordeal in that church ; you never heard a preacher at his best, staying in the house and stuck up to order, as it were ; and when the neighbouring clergy were sent for in turn, it was marvellous that they did not break down under the honour and excitement.

Of all the clerical notabilities, the one that I understood the best and felt the most at home with was the famous “Jack Russell.” Bishops, Deans, and Canons will go on for ever, but the grand old sporting parsons are disappearing from the scene to return no more. He brought a Devonshire breeze with him, and you thought of Dartmoor, and Exmoor, and Whyte Melville, and Katerfelto, and the old-world village, where the parishioners were so fond and proud of him ; yet even the austerest of Bishops was unable to detect a flaw in his parish ministrations, or prove that his delight in harmless recreations was incom-

patible with the work and dignity of the Church. You could picture him setting off to the meet, every inch a sportsman with a dash of the clerical, the salutations of the rustics as he rode along, and the greetings of his neighbours from far and wide at the covert side. How they must miss him there ! Those upright and downright people ought to live for ever ; we cannot spare or replace them, and in a country neighbourhood they leave a void that is never filled up. Kingsley loved a day's hunting, and was a good judge of a horse ; but his political and literary talents prevented him from being so closely identified with sport as his famous contemporary ; and if anyone wants to know how "Parson Russell" enjoyed his visits to Sandringham, and how he danced the New Year in with the Princess of Wales, and how they made him quite at home with the "port wine and the twice of fish" (it is whispered that "foxes have holes" was suggested as an appropriate text for his sermon), you will find it all (the last little item excepted) in his biography, written by an appreciative hand and a new edition of which has lately been published.

Of the great rival statesmen, Lord Beaconsfield appeared to enjoy his visit the most. Gladstone must have been aware that he was no particular favourite, and a little bit suspicious and on his guard, as if he knew that under all the diplomatic civility H.R.H. would dearly have loved to upset his solemnity with

a few of his favourite jokes, an apple-pie bed, or a roll in the snow, or stuff up his dress-coat pocket with sticky sweets ; it must have been a great temptation, but rather too dangerous and expensive an amusement in that direction. He was a terrifying audience in church, so dreadfully attentive, and grim, and glum, as if he had all the cares of the world upon him, and perhaps he had, yet he need not have looked like it. "Beaky" carried them airily enough. Even the village tradesman who played the organ after the usual country custom, and who might be supposed to have never heard of such a person, was overwhelmed with confusion in Gladstone's presence. The instrument ran riot and got worse and worse, and the poor man grew more and more nervous until it began to groan in the prayers and wouldn't go on in the hymns ; while the Prince waxed more wrathful every minute, and there was a regular explosion after church ; for, a few Sundays before, having had enough of native talent, he had ordered the man to be dismissed ; but the Princess and Mr Onslow, having talked it over together, agreed that it "would not be quite kind to send him away in such a hurry and hurt his feelings when he had done nothing wrong." They, therefore, concocted a benevolent little scheme for keeping him on for a time, hoping "perhaps he would improve and be allowed to stay altogether ;" but after Church they were summoned with a "Come up here, both of you,"

and "caught it," as the schoolboys say. We told Mr Onslow that he ought to be very proud of being called up in such company—"both of you," the Princess of Wales and himself—and that most people would have given their heads for the honour! But he never could be persuaded to see things from a vulgar, worldly point of view, and was only concerned that it should have happened with Gladstone in the house, fearing he might be wrongly impressed. Perhaps his fears were groundless, and the G. O. M. may have looked upon it only as an ordinary domestic occurrence, and "explained it away" to himself in a satisfactory manner.

The conclusion of the poor grocer's musical career was inevitable after this, and his place was filled up by an individual who treated us to a celestial and much-approved-of harmony, but was a perfect incubus to the much-enduring Mr Onslow, drinking his sherry, wanting to smoke in the dining-room, and insisting upon having Miss Onslow's pony-carriage to Wolferton Station (he did not live on the estate, only came over for practising day, and Sunday), and winding up these intolerable liberties by giving a party in the schoolroom, and sending in the list of the "ladies and gentlemen" invited, headed by the schoolmistress and himself, to Mr Onslow, requesting him to supply the wine, and give them the pleasure of his company; to the wrath of an

old family servant at the Rectory, who asked them how they dared call themselves "ladies and gentlemen," and send it in to "master."

To be employed in any capacity about the Prince is apt to have an upsetting tendency. People do not know what they may not rise to should they happen to take his fancy, or suit him in any way, forgetting the proverbial fickleness of Royalty, and the large percentage of failures who come toppling down some day when least expected. Not to all is given the luck of that remarkable Scot, who climbed up, and held his own with a strong hand against all comers, making the whole Court, and even the sons and daughters of the Royal House, bow to his imperious will, and submit to any indignity he might be pleased to inflict, with the certainty of being backed up in all things by his infatuated sovereign.

Lord Beaconsfield was, as we know, the favourite minister, both with the Queen and the Prince, and his Sunday visits to Sandringham were very welcome. I do not think he valued this preference, and the honours showered upon him so greatly as was supposed, and was rather bored with it at times, as if he saw through it all. At heart, perhaps, he preferred popularity with the country, or may have been too cynical or contemptuous to value anything but power. But having been drawn into a court groove, he found it more difficult to keep his independence than he

contemplated, for the glamour of Royalty will creep like a palsy over the most powerful intellect, and it seems wiser for ministers to beware, and keep aloof from Court patronage, for in trying to please both the throne and the nation, they may come to grief between the two. It was a great blow to his Royal friends when the scale turned against him and he had to go. He certainly obliged them a great deal too much when in office, and more than he ought to have done, but perhaps as much from courtesy and good-nature as servility. It must be such a very awkward position for a statesman in power to be appealed to by Her Majesty in the joint capacity of a Sovereign and a mother on her children's behalf, with the difficulty of refusing the one and disobeying the other, and hardly fair to subject any man to such an ordeal. Even Gladstone, who up to the present time has certainly not been a courtier, announced, a few years ago, that the Queen had no savings, when there is good reason for supposing the accumulations are enormous, which no one ought to grudge Her Majesty; but why should this be concealed and denied? And by whose order were those memorable dispatches penned, announcing that the Duke of Connaught led the Brigade of Guards at Tel El Kebir, and was exposed to a heavy fire? To obey orders and remain in the rear may be more worthy of our admiration, and more galling to a brave and gallant officer than the

most brilliant feat of arms; but that is no reason why we should be insulted with these garbled accounts—we are entitled to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth from our leading men, and let Royal commands be thrown to the winds, if they point in an opposite direction. It seems almost time that "commands" and oaths of allegiance should be abolished for good and all. They hamper conscientious people, and afford a convenient shelter for courtiers and parasites. If our soldiers, sailors, and legislators swear allegiance to their country, that surely is sufficient.

The Prince's Indian tour may have been a little bit of Beaconsfield finesse. Ask John Bull for money point blank, and you won't get it; persuade him it is a grand investment and he comes down with what you please. Nothing would have induced the nation to increase the Prince's income, but the wherewithal for the Indian expedition was cheerfully voted, and everyone snubbed who presumed to doubt the wonderful benefit that both countries were to derive from it. We had a special farewell sermon in Sandringham Church, and the whole place turned out to see him off. We were sorry to lose sight of him that autumn morning; he seemed sorry too, and looked back to see the last of us. Afterwards we heard of the enthusiasm and regret that accompanied his departure from our shores, of the magnificent receptions rivalling the

Arabian Nights in Oriental luxury and profusion, of the fascination he exercised over the native Princes, and how mightily he was enjoying himself with the "choice spirits" who accompanied him ; and the whole nation was wild with joy upon his return with a goodly pile of treasure-gifts, and we had a very great day at Sandringham the first time he came down again. We got no "frolics" out of the Grand Old Man, and owed him a grudge accordingly. In Norfolk, we should like His Royal Highness to have a blank cheque upon the nation, in the hope of coming in for a share of the good things ourselves. But, though the G.O.M. is very disagreeable, I cannot understand why people should take the trouble to hate him as they do. Never did any human being evoke such bitter personal hostility. Some of the country clergy, who ought to be charitable, will turn livid at the mention of his name, and believe he is sent as a scourge for the punishment of our national sins and omissions. It always appears to me that he tries to act according to his lights, only those lights are so very confused and ethereal that no one can comprehend them but himself ; and, being endowed with an erratic and visionary temperament, "he sees what nobody else sees, but cannot see what is quite plain," and if you were being murdered in his presence, instead of coming to the rescue, he would stand arguing and explaining, and analysing the motives of

your murderer until the last dying shriek. These tendencies, coupled with an inability to comprehend the varying effects of creed, race, and class, white, brown, and black blood being all alike to him, make it about as safe to entrust him with the destinies of a great nation, as it would be to turn a lunatic into Hyde Park with a loaded revolver.

There are other memories connected with Sandringham Church, besides those of statesmen, preachers, visitors, etc. In writing down the events of life as they occur, what a strange jumble it seems, grave and gay, comedy and tragedy, happiness and sorrow, in quick succession or interwoven all through. The funeral of the little Prince Alexander John of Wales was one of the long-remembered ceremonies. I was commanded to attend with Miss Onslow, or should have kept far away from the intrusion. It was so simply conducted, and with such a total absence of pomp and ceremony, that it might have been the child of a country squire; the tiny coffin covered with flowers and carried with reverence and care by an old family servant, the mother crying at home, and the father and children the only mourners; and it seemed so much more natural and better for the poor little thing to be at rest in a churchyard with flowers round its grave and the fresh air of heaven above, and near its home, than in a grand Royal vault at Windsor or elsewhere. Then there were the

never-to-be-forgotten Sundays during the Prince's illness when we dare hardly look at the Princess, but could hear her sobbing as if her heart would break ; and the little letter she wrote to Mr Onslow, which it was decided should be published and shared by the nation. I can still recall her face of happy, grateful triumph the first time she brought the Prince to church after his illness.

The christening of a native servant-boy took place after service one Sunday, and a permission was sent round to remain in church and see it. The Prince had brought him back from Egypt, where, I think, he had been one of the donkey drivers to the suite ; and he made a picturesque addition to the Household in his Eastern costume, smiling and showing his ivory teeth, and was made much of by everybody, until the sudden emancipation and profusion around led poor Hakim into confused ideas upon the rights of property, and the propensity continuing to develop, the effect of a baptismal ceremonial and preparatory instruction was tried, and Mr. Onslow was delighted with the quickness and cleverness with which his little heathen pupil mastered the catechism and Scripture lessons. The Prince and Princess stood sponsors in person, and if that did not cure him I do not know what would. But Hakim was evidently not intended to illustrate the doctrine of regeneration ; he became more trying than before, and the

only use he made of his newly-acquired Scriptural knowledge was in replying to the Marlborough House housekeeper's despairing inquiry of "Hakim, Hakim, do you know what the Eighth Commandment is?" "Yes, ma'am: thou shalt have no other gods but *me*."

In one of his pranks he dressed himself up in the Jagers' Highland costume, took a new gun, popped away with it until he broke it, and then put it back without saying a word. It was handed to the Prince to shoot with, and of course wouldn't go off, and the maker might have got into distracting trouble, had it not leaked out that Master Hakim was at the bottom of the mischief. There was a great stir made, the Rector and all the household summoned, and Hakim threatened with a penitentiary, which frightened him into quietude for a time; but he soon forgot it and was as incorrigible as before. I cannot remember how many neckties he ordered at a London shop, and the bill to be sent in to the Prince, but I know it was something fabulous; and he once marched about with the Duke of Edinburgh's very particular umbrella, declaring he had given it him. He had to be sent away at last, I believe to a clergyman, with a view of exorcising him, I suppose. I hope he was kind to the poor boy, for his peccadilloes were more monkeyism than crimes, and I am sure the Prince and Princess would wish him to be well treated, however tiresome he may have been.

The Royal party spent the Sunday afternoon in the usual country-gentleman's fashion, taking their visitors round the pheasantries, kennels, home-farm, and to tea in the Princess's dairy boudoir.

After the Sandringham season was over and they had gone back to Marlborough House, we subsided into our usual quiet Sundays, and enjoyed them the more after all the excitement; we enjoyed that too, but were glad of the rest between times. Few but Royal personages can endure an endless turmoil from one year's end to the other, or can have the opportunity of doing so even if inclined.

CHAPTER XII

ROYAL ENTERTAINMENTS.

THE Sandringham festivities were naturally the principal excitements of the neighbourhood, and kept us all alive during the winter season. These were so arranged that all classes could share in them ; and what with county, farmers' and servants' balls, labourers' dinners, visits to country houses, meets of the hounds, and other sociabilities, everybody from far and near had the opportunity of making acquaintance with their Royal Highnesses.

“ Bustle about,” said Lord Beaconsfield to a young man who asked his opinion upon the best way of getting on in life. “ Bustle about, get hold of the Press, and shake hands with everybody,” might have been the advice of that astute connoisseur of human nature to the Heir to the Throne, in whose case policy and pleasure are happily combined, he so thoroughly enjoys going everywhere and seeing everybody and everything, looking round their houses, and inquiring how they live and what they do. Headaches and

nerves must be an unknown quantity to him. He loves a mob, a noise, and a crowd, is always on the stir about something, and would find repose and quiet the most grievous infliction. I believe all England would be invited to Sandringham, if they could be crammed in, and everyone from the highest to the lowest treated with hospitality and made to feel welcome and at home.

Unbounded popularity is the result of this accessibility. Everything must be condoned and forgiven in a Prince, who is all jollity and affability to all sorts and conditions of men, and Norfolk stands first and foremost in fealty and obedience. It is his very private and particular kingdom. However much his power may be curtailed elsewhere, there his word is law and his rule absolute; he is allowed to meddle and manage exactly as he pleases. If he held up a field mawkin (scarecrow) to be worshipped, the inhabitants would fall down before it; whilst any individual who had unfortunately incurred the Royal displeasure would be boycotted and hounded to the death. To my mind this has rather spoiled the dear old county, and think a certain amount of independence would be preferable. I look forward, not without misgiving, to the time when, if our ubiquitous Prince continues to fly about the country in all directions, opening parks and public buildings, dining with "Savages" and newspaper staffs, mixing in

every kind of society, and making up between times to the “working man,” the infection will spread, until we are transformed into a nation of courtiers,—a consummation the reverse of desirable for many reasons.

It is said that when all the world is educated there will be no more pedants and bluestockings; and perhaps when everybody has shaken hands with the Prince of Wales, they will not be so upset and demented with the honour as at present. Even in Norfolk a little *sub-rosa* grumbling crops up occasionally; nor do the Royal balls and parties bring unmixed peace and goodwill, though all is obedience and serenity on the surface.

Upon one occasion, under the most severe provocation, being wounded in the tenderest point, the Squiresses attempted a slight rebellion. They considered, and with some reason, that the Sandringham County Balls should be kept exclusively for their own class, or perhaps to a few others, duly introduced and patronised by themselves. In former days they were fairly “select,” but of late years have been turned into an *omnium gatherum*; have degenerated into a crush, for almost anyone can get an invitation, so the glory and honour has departed. No one likes to have a monopoly broken up, and it is certainly trying for those who are perfectly contented with their position in life, who wish to be neither higher nor lower, and have a right to go to Court, to be levelled down

to the getting-up-stairs folk, who never are contented with their position, and always pushing, aspiring, and struggling to be levelled up. So the "County" began to make excuse and stay away, in some instances glad to escape the expense of new dresses—a serious consideration in times of agricultural depression and reduced rentals. H.R.H. very speedily noticed the omission, read the Riot Act, and brought them to their bearings, and they had to go with as good a grace as could be assumed, relieving their minds by a few mutterings and wonderments at the Royalties "making themselves so common, and that the line should be drawn somewhere."

It *has* also been rumoured that the lowering of the social franchise does not give unmixed gratification to the Browns, Jones, and Robinsons, who are so greatly benefited by it. When Brown sallies forth with a halo round his head, conscious of a card for the Sandringham ball on his mantelpiece, and meeting Jones, whom he intends to crush with the intelligence, finds that he has received a similar honour, poor Brown feels crestfallen, and doesn't know how he shall break it to his women-kind at home, so *he* begins to think the Royalties are making themselves too common, and that the line should be drawn somewhere, only it must begin, if you please, with Jones, not with Brown. If it were not for the crush and crowd that it entails, breaking down the barriers is a

good thing in some respects; it lessens the fighting and struggling for invitations which at one time assumed most formidable dimensions, though I will not put my foot in a wasps' nest by relating the manœuvres and devices resorted to by people who, you would have thought, were above such things. The clergy were particularly pertinacious in demanding admittance, besieging Mr Onslow without mercy. It was natural they should all like to come, only it was amusing to hear of some who had religious scruples about balls and dancing, giving "Royal commands" as an excuse to their neighbours for violating their consciences, when I knew from behind the scenes how they had bothered and worried until the "commands" had been sent as a quietus. Sometimes I was asked who the people were who applied for cards, and said the best I could for them, taking very good care not to let them know; it would have been such a mortal offence; they would never have forgiven me, everyone being supposed to go upon their own position and merits.

The sacred "County people" have some consolations vouchsafed to them in being invited now and then on strictly private occasions; and a few in the immediate neighbourhood, the "elect," I used to call it are asked to join the Royal and house-party at the farmers' and servants' balls, are received in the drawing-room, walk in the procession to the ball-

room, and take part in the opening quadrille. A few interlopers may arise even there, but, on the whole, it is fairly exclusive and makes up for a great deal. The smart, rich farmers, on the other hand, are crazy to be invited to the County Balls, and are quite as good as many who go there now, so no one can be contented all round.

I had not been to a Royal evening party at Sandringham for years,—not since I went with my husband to a little dance in the drawing-room of the old house, soon after the Prince had bought the estate. Afterwards the deep mourning kept me at home.

Then there was the disgrace over the game business ; besides, the Hall was shut up for a year or two during the rebuilding. But now there were to be a series of housewarmings, beginning with the County Ball. If it had not been for my Rectory friends, I think I should have declined the invitation ; not from any disrespect or wish to be singular, but I had settled down to my solitary life, had given up all evening going-out, and did not want to begin again ; and when you get into the habit of living in a serge gown and thick boots, you feel comfortable in nothing else, and get out of the way of dressing yourself, particularly for a Court Ball. I should have liked to look on from the gallery, but in no other way. It was very good of Mr Onslow and his mother to take the trouble they did to persuade me to go, urging

that it would be to my interest, and that to stay away would look as if I resented what had gone before ; in fact, they would not hear of my giving it up. It seems presumptuous of me to write as if the Prince would have noticed my absence, but he notices everything of that kind. The next morning it would have been, "Onslow, so your friend, Mrs Cresswell, didn't choose to come ;" and that peace-making individual would have pleaded nervousness, or some other benevolent excuse.

It ended in my routing out a trousseau gown that had hardly been worn, and some old lace, and sending them to London to be done up ; for if you feel that your dress is all right it inspires you with an inward peace and composure that the godless Parisians say even religion cannot bestow. There was no one staying with me, though for subsequent gaieties I generally took in people from a distance, living so conveniently near. This time I had to dress and drive up alone ; but I knew almost everyone from the neighbourhood ; moreover, the former owner of Sandringham was staying in the house, the first visit he had paid to the Prince since he had sold the place, and that morning I had received a note from him regretting he had been unable to call, but hoped to meet me at the ball. I had forgotten that the Royal clocks were kept half an hour faster than ours ; besides, I had been detained with some

particular business until I was late for dressing, which takes such a time when you have got out of the way of it, and have no regular maid. The reception that was held that evening before the ball and through which Mr Onslow had been anxiously looking out for me, was over, and the first Royal Quadrille had begun. The balls always open with that ceremony, the Prince and Princess dancing with the visitors of the highest rank, generally their Royal relations, and if none are present, with the next highest—duke and duchess. They danced the long way of the quadrille, and if the sides were not filled up with the house-party, anyone else might join in, but I always took very good care not to go there unless I had a “command,” or was taken up by one of the Prince’s friends.

I had not seen H.R.H. since the memorable court-martial, and hoped to escape observation, but he spied me out the moment I came into the room, left the quadrille, and came across and shook hands with me, an *amende honorable* that I truly valued and appreciated. Indeed, I always felt that if it were not for the game and the mischief-making, I should have got on very well with the Prince. There was no reason why I should not, and it was very hard to be so persistently misrepresented. My troubles were all forgotten that evening. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and was so glad that I went. It seemed in-

credible that it could be the same place where I was so harassed in other ways. Mr Onslow was radiant at the success of his efforts ; and I hope the Prince did not find me so evil-minded and malignant as was reported, for several invitations followed both for public and private entertainments. Under different circumstances, I might have been very glad to go, but after "considering wid myself," as the niggers say, I decided to withdraw from them to a certain extent. I could not afford the dress, and it would have interfered too much with my work and home-life. It was a pity the opportunity fell upon the wrong person instead of some one with money and leisure to avail herself of it, and who could have followed it up through London seasons and Marlborough House.

Whenever I went I never failed to spend a pleasant evening, and received more courtesy from my illustrious Host and Hostess than from any house I ever was in. The Prince is noted for his powers of entertainment and exertions to make everyone enjoy themselves. When a "house party" is expected, he superintends the arrangements, and remembers their individual tastes and pursuits. A gouty Squire, who grumbled at having to go, was completely mollified at finding a room prepared for him on the ground floor, the Prince thinking he would prefer it. On the other hand, with the extraordinary

variety of character that H.R.H. presents, those who are invited as butts and buffoons, and the recipients of practical jokes, have rather a rough time of it ; though, if they prefer to go in that way rather than not go at all, they have no one but themselves to blame. The effect of a visit to Sandringham upon a certain order of Radicals, who are treated with the greatest deference, is perfectly astounding. It acts as a patent conjuring machine—a Republican stuffed in at one end—a Courtier squeezed out at the other. Even Mr Joseph Chamberlain has since proclaimed the new toast of the “Throne and the People,” though it has been explained that the people only intend to keep and use the throne as a tool to do their bidding and to assist them in abolishing existing institutions before it descends into its own grave. That is rather a lame excuse, and we may believe it or not as we like—whilst the Press are more effectually gagged and manipulated by Royal condescensions than their predecessors were by the pillories and penalties of olden times.

Of the three large balls of the season, the county, farmers', and servants', I liked the servants' the best. It was more unique and picturesque, and the old-fashioned dances were allowed, Sir Rodger, the “Triumph,” country dances, jigs, and reels. The old Royal retainers are such very nice people, quite a race apart, and from the time they have lived there, must

almost have been born in the service. Old C— at the lodge was one of the *ancien régime*, dating from a pre-Victorian age. He was a great feature in the jigs, dancing them with the buoyancy and gravity that elderly and rather stout people are wont to exhibit. That old man must have known a “deal,” though he prudently kept it to himself, as retainers are bound to do. He had married another institution from Buckingham Palace, and the principal lodge was given them to end their days in. The dear old housekeeper had been brought up in the Duchess of Gloucester’s establishment, and was a great favourite with all ; the Princess Alice always paying a visit to her domain when she came to Sandringham.

One year the Marlborough House servants came down by special train, and the rival establishments were in great force, the decided belle of the evening being Madame Francatelli, who did not belong to the household, but was invited out of compliment to the distinguished *chef*, and was most becomingly dressed, and not at all forward or flirtacious. The ball opened with a country dance, the Prince and Princess leading off with the heads of the respective departments ; and the Duchess of Teck, whose good-nature and frank enjoyment made her a great acquisition, with another of the upper servants. One year the Princess’s coachman, the most diminutive man

in the room, was her partner, and the contrast was rather striking. The house-party, equerries, ladies-in-waiting, and all invited from the neighbourhood, were ordered to join in, no shirking or sitting out allowed, and when the sides had been made up, the Prince and Princess set off with their partners, round and round, down the middle and up again, and so on to the end, the Prince the jolliest of the jolly and the life of the party, as he is wherever he goes. I never saw such amazing vitality. His own Master of the Ceremonies, signalling and sending messages to the band, arranging every dance, and when to begin and when to leave off, noticing the smallest mistake in the figures, and putting people in their places. In the "Triumph," which is such an exhausting dance, he looked as if he could have gone on all night and into the middle of next week without stopping, and I really believe he could. He is an antidote to every text and sermon that ever was preached upon the pleasures of the world palling upon the wearied spirit. They never pall upon his, and year after year he comes up "to time," with renewed capacity for revelry and junketings. It was a mercy to have a quadrille now and then for a little rest. The Marlborough-House housekeeper, who was attired in a pea-green silk, danced it in the old polite style, holding up her gown in points, and dropping a little curtsey to her partner each time she came forward,

like Mrs Fezziwig of immortal memory. Then a jig was started, and it was so pretty to see the way the Princess danced it, while the state liveries of the footmen and green velvet of the gamekeepers and Highland costumes, mixed up with the scarlet coats of the country gentlemen, and the lovely toilettes and the merry tune, made a sight to be seen or heard. Almost before one dance was ended the Prince started another ; and suddenly the Scotch pipers would screech out, and the Prince would fold his arms and fling himself into a Highland fling, and so on fast and furious until far into the small hours of the morning, with supper intervening, when our former partners, the footmen, waited upon everyone as demurely as if they had not been careering about together just before. It may be an antiquated notion, but I don't like to see quite young girls waltzing with groom-boys and men-servants, and since Sandringham set the fashion, you hear of it in other places. Country dances are all very well, but not the round and rounds ; at least I think so, and that it would have been better not to have begun that sort of thing.

The private parties were very pleasant, but rather more formidable, at least for me. One morning when the Royal party were shooting near the house, the Prince called to say they had been getting up a little dance for that evening, and he thought I might like to

come and bring any friends that were staying with me. I was alone as usual, and when I arrived at the house had hardly the courage to be ushered into the drawing-room, when one of the Equerries passing through the corridor gave me his arm and took me in, and I was soon made to feel at home, the Prince introducing me to some of the people, among whom I remember Lord Henry Lennox and the Dean (Wellesley) of Windsor being particularly pleasant. Supper was served that evening at a long narrow table, the Prince and Princess sitting at the centre, and their illustrious kinsfolk opposite and on each side of them. The Dean of Windsor, who took me in, was placed next to the august party, and just as there was a pause in the conversation, the Duke of Teck, who is also gifted with the beautiful manners that seem indigenous to them all, began apologising across the table for not having recognised me before, to which I made some blundering answer, and felt "covered with confusion as with a cloke." To be perched up among Royal personages is all very well for a change, but for real comfort, give me my "equals." I never had that honour without remembering afterwards that I had done or said the wrong thing. In my own house I did not mind so much, particularly when the Princess and her children walked down to call, finding it less formidable to receive than to be received, notwith-

standing their efforts to remove all feeling of *gêne* or embarrassment.

Another time there was a conjuring entertainment for the Royal children, and our invitation had been forgotten and did not come till eight o'clock. When the bell rang at that unusual hour, we thought it was the "lunatic," and went in procession to answer the door, the coachman keeping well behind, considering it the "Missus'" place to go first at all times. G— had been out with the hounds all day on his pony, and put to bed dead tired, and was in his first sleep, and I thought we should never wake the child in time. We shook him and tried to make him understand, but he rolled over and was sound asleep again in a moment, till we were in despair, for I knew he would enjoy it so much when he got there. We dressed him at last only half awake and strongly objecting, and managed to scramble off before the performance began, which finally roused him up, and he behaved in the most exemplary manner through the evening and supper.

It was a funny sort of change, living in the wilds, farming all day, and in my den in the evening until the last moment for dressing, and then to find oneself in the full blaze of a court. Almost every year I had leave to invite any friends I liked for the County Ball, and sometimes was very glad of the opportunity: but generally I lent my rooms to neighbours from a dis-

tance who had their own invitation, and were glad to be saved the long drive home. Then I had no responsibility, and could not make a mistake and invite the wrong people. When I had strangers with me, the Prince and Princess would be most gracious to them, shaking hands and making some little appropriate remark. At one ball I took a bride and bridegroom, and before the evening was over, the Prince sent me word that he thought I should like to bring them to the next entertainment. It was one of those evenings when the "elect" were kept penned up in such a hot ante-room that, excepting for the honour of the thing, I would rather have been outside, until the drawing-room door was thrown open, and we marched in single file and made our reverence to the Royalties, like the London Drawing-room in miniature. When my turn came, and I was just rising from the depths of the earth, and passing on, the Prince stopped me and desired me to wait and introduce my friends when they came up. The people who filed in between stared to see me standing there, and I was very glad when they appeared, and, the ceremony over, to make my escape, the Prince paying the bride the compliment of dancing with her during the evening. His Royal Highness went through a duty dance with me once a year, and was a very lively partner. "I like to dance to the tune"—a hint that my movements were much too stiff and solemn in the Lancers. The "light fantas-

tic step" is all very well for constant practitioners, but I did not feel disposed to run the risk of slipping on the highly-polished floor. "Going down the middle" one evening at a servants' ball, with H—V—, the ex-master of hounds, he fell with a tremendous crash, nearly pulling me down too.

Once, when dancing with the Prince, who had gone forward in the quadrille, I noticed what looked very like a roll of bank notes disappearing under the train of a lady's dress, and picking them up just as they were being whirled out of sight, found they were a nice little parcel of £20 each! The delay had thrown me out of the figure, and the Prince was calling me up to time, when I showed him my treasure-trove. In a twinkling they were out of my hands and into his pocket. "Mine, Mrs Cresswell, mine; winnings at whist"—delighted to get them back again! I ought to have had one returned as "reward money," and am sure many of those society women would have made him disgorge, or picked his pocket if he refused. There is nothing they will not say or do; and sometimes H.R.H. will stand anything, but at others take offence, and have to be propitiated into good-humour again. They seem to find him very fascinating, and he certainly has a very killing way with them, apart from being the Prince of Wales. Pretty little Lady — was dancing *vis-a-vis* to him in the Lancers, and making some mistakes, H.R.H. reprimanded her in

the most insinuating tones : "I think we ought to have a dancing lesson."

Hers was a sad tale. One of those cases more to be pitied than blame ; so very young, and without protection of any kind, with a father who kept up the old Highland habit of deep whisky potations (he wandered inside the Communion rails in church one day, unable to give a very clear account of how he got there), she could hardly be expected to turn out differently from her married sisters, of whom the old "Thane" is reported to have said, when the news of the last elopement was brought to him, "Dear me, I should think my daughters must have been very badly brought up !" and troubled himself about it no more. He was an amusing old sinner, and may possibly have been very popular on his estates and adored by the peasantry, as those "rips" often are. At some foreign watering-place, where Milords are still Milords, a lady asked him to take her for a drive past the public promenade, thus to establish her position and character. He begged to be excused, on the grounds that he had lost his character for so many years that it would not be the slightest service to her. Poor little Lady —, after raising a "deal of talk," was married off to Lord —, whom she couldn't endure ; and one day in the Row she stopped a kind old clergyman that she knew, and told him her woes, and how wretched she was. She soon ran away with some-

body else, was divorced, and the man who afterwards married her became mixed up in that case of —, which with one or two other leading Divorce-Court scandals, throws a little light upon what goes on, though they are not often so imprudent as to come before that tribunal and be publicly found out. However, I will not enter upon *chroniques scandaleuses*, and should not have named this if it had not been in print before. What a book it would be if I did! and I wonder which the loyal old ladies would enjoy the most, reading the gossip or scarifying me for writing it? Without wishing the Princess of Wales to become strong-minded, or lose her unique personality, an occasional stand against some of the doubtful characters, instead of ignoring, condoning, and receiving all alike, might be desirable in the interest of morality; and though the Princess suits the nation so well, the Duchess of Edinburgh would perhaps make a better leader of society. That *très grande dame*, with her Romanoff temper and determination, would soon make a clean sweep within the precincts of the Court, which, as the Court reigns supreme in all social matters, might lead to better things.

The members of the Royal Family visited Sandringham in succession, and with their remarkable gift of remembering everybody, generally honoured you with a recognition, until shaking hands with Royal and Serene Highnesses, Knights of the Garter,

and decorated notabilities became quite an accustomed privilege. The Duke of Cambridge always seemed to enjoy his week's holiday, and liked seeing the same people again, and you were sure of a cheery greeting from him. He could not comprehend how any woman could choose the life that I did, and one day, when he came to Appleton with the Prince, put me through a catechism about it, and after gratifying his curiosity as to how I spent the day, remarked, "But the evening, Mrs Cresswell, the evening, now what do you do in the evening?"

"I have the accounts, sir, and the work to think about."

"But what an isolated life; have you no neighbours now—neighbours?"

"Yes, sir, very nice neighbours." I did not like to say that I hardly ever went to see them, and so make myself out more eccentric than I appeared to be already.

"And then you say times are so bad; now what will you do about that?"

"I think, sir, His Royal Highness won't get any rent," at which the Prince grinned amazingly; but the rent "was collared" all the same, like the bank notes at the ball.

Among the older members of society that have now passed away, leaving the remembrance of a strongly-marked individuality, are Bernal Osborne

and Sir Anthony de Rothschild. The caustic wit, pungent satire, and Radical professions of the former, which he would not abjure even in Royal precincts, have been made known to the public by memoirs and reviews. "Oh, for half an hour of Bernal Osborne!" says one of his posthumous admirers. Well, I have had that felicity, but I will not score it as a social triumph; for being noted for his good-nature to society waifs and strays, I strongly suspect that the pleasure of exasperating the great ladies, by bestowing his coveted attentions upon an outsider, had something to do with that privilege!

Sir Anthony Rothschild was a curious mixture of the great Hebrew financier and the English country-gentleman, appearing to take far more pride in the latter position than the former. It was a real pleasure to take him round a farm; he understood it so thoroughly, and did not praise the wrong thing, or give notes of admiration all round, and ended by buying some of my "improved Norfolk" pigs, for which he was pretty well chaffed by H.R.H. when he went back. If genius is said to be only an infinite capacity for taking trouble, the success of the House of Rothschild must be an infinite capacity for attending to business. He told me that when in town he was at the office every day excepting Saturday. To

“retire” and leave it in other hands does not seem to be their way of making and keeping millions together. He was a jovial old man, and, of all things in the world, fond of dancing, but not a comfortable partner in the Royal Quadrille, for he persisted in taking a line of his own, and capering about in all directions, and had to be caught and brought back to his place. It did not matter with Sir Anthony. He was one of the privileged ones and could do as he liked, but seemed shrewd enough to take pretty good care of himself, and not to be easily beguiled into a loan without security.

In recalling the gaieties to remembrance, the evening skating parties stand out as a scene of fairy-like enchantment, the lake and island illuminated with coloured lamps and torches, the skating chairs with glow-worm lights, and the skaters flitting past and disappearing in the darkness. The banks were lined with villagers, the Prince having given them leave to come and look on; and to make it complete they ought to have been in costume instead of the imitation-ladies’ dress our working people are so fond of; but the darkness helped to hide the deficiency, and made the grouping very effective.

The Princess wore a grey Siberian style of costume and cap, and looked—but I must not go into raptures every time I name her! She skated arm-in-arm

with one of her ladies, and did not go far down the lake, so I could see her all the time, for I was no proficient in feats of skill and agility, and did not fancy being trundled about in a chair, so I stood and looked on. The air in the still frosty night was not nearly so shivery as our usual damp and wind, and with so much to see you forgot the elements; though I was not sorry one evening for the tumbler of hot negus the Prince brought me from the tent with his own Royal hands, hospitably remarking, that he thought I must be cold standing there so long—and “do you never skate?” I was very much chaffed about this, but not at all ill-naturedly, by one of my brothers-in-law. “Pretty rowdy lot you were on the ice the other night, your old nurse tippling gin with the shoemaker at one end of the lake, and you drinking negus with the Prince at the other.” I beg to say I did not drink negus with the Prince, he only fetched it for me, which I considered a great condescension, though it was not done as if he thought so himself. It is those sort of things that make it impossible not to like the Prince in a way, though I cannot say I quite approve of him altogether.

The ice parties went on until the frost broke up, and I was invited for the course, but only went that once, the Prince reminding me of the omission the next time I saw him with, “You never came to the skating again, Mrs Cresswell.”

I found it more prudent not to name these little extra invitations to my acquaintance, or else make out that I was only asked because I lived so near and on the place. It is never worth while to arouse unnecessary irritation, and there is something in the vicinity of a court that excites an extraordinary restlessness in a neighbourhood, and an alarming development of the green-eyed monster. It seems as if I were always depreciating my own sex, but you do not see the best of them under those circumstances. I have noticed that women who are friendly and pleasant in a general way, will look black and queer, and make a tart remark or preserve an ominous silence, if you are incautious enough to name having been to a party to which they were not asked, while there are very few who would be glad that you went and enjoyed yourself, and frankly say they would like to have gone too. Even when you maintained a judicious reserve, you would soon discover they had heard of it by the way they would peck all around, even at Royalty. "The Princess is not looking well this year." "Lady — told us that the little Princes cried with fright at the conjuror the other evening." (Quite untrue, and I don't believe Lady — ever said so.) One old lady asked me if I was aware of the "under-current of vice" going on; and an evan-

gelical dame, on a visit from a distance, requested to know whether these tales about the Prince were true or not, as she should be so glad to contradict them on her return home. I declined to gratify that ancient saint, thinking her imagination quite equal to supplying any deficiency of information. Now and then I got into trouble through some official mistake. At one of the parties the Comptroller, who ushered us in, looked into the ante-room, and not being extensively acquainted with the aborigines, could not recollect their names and degrees, and happening to remember me and my cognomen, called me up before people of higher position in the county ; for, not having married to elder-sonship, I had no position at all, with the exception of the rather anomalous one I had carved out for myself. It was impossible to stand there arguing and explaining with the Royalties waiting, wholly unaware of the turmoil without, and I was obliged to march in, conscious of a train of daggers behind me. If they would only have comprehended that I did not care for those sort of things. But if I had "gone in for" society, I daresay I should have been as keen about them as anyone, still, as it was, it made no difference to me whether I was first or last, looked up to or down upon, liked or disliked.

I will not paint the lily by attempting to describe the personal appearance of my Royal Mistress. That "sweetest of faces" is now enshrined in every household in the land. Queens of society, celebrated beauties from all nations, assembled at Sandringham from time to time; yet there was an indescribable something about her that threw them all into the shade. I have heard even the men declare that every woman looks frightful in the room with the Princess of Wales. Peerless and gemlike she stood alone, the embodiment of all that poets have ever dreamed in their dreams of fair women. The only women I remember who in any way resemble her, or would have "matched her in a curricule," were Lady Spencer (Spenser's Faerie Queen), Lady Blandford, Lady Dudley, and perhaps one or two others. Verily "there is no beauty like the beauty of a woman;" and if the "jewel of gold" is not misplaced, and can be admired without reservation, you are glad that Eve was permitted to bring that gift with her from Paradise. The "professionals" were quite out of the running, notwithstanding their undeniable beauty and siren graces, treating us to Helens of Troy and other mythological goddesses; they lacked the simplicity and unconsciousness of the gentlewoman, for be it remembered this new "professional" position never can or will

be accepted as the highest type of beauty and breeding, though little care they for that so long as crowds follow them about, and Princes and Peers are in there train.

Another remarkable thing about the Princess is, that whilst most women look better in one dress than another, one style suits them and one does not, she looks well in everything. You see her in full dress with rows of priceless pearls, and those magnificent diamonds which of all adornments are the most difficult to wear in profusion, without exceeding the limits of good taste, and not look smothered in them, and you think that decidedly evening dress sets her off to the best advantage. You see her in the morning and find you have made a mistake, and like her better in that quiet serge dress and her favourite Danish cross. Yes, most certainly she ought to be seen in the morning, and so on through all the changes—then, in a close-fitting bonnet was there ever anything like the Princess? her sailor's hat, or riding-habit, or rough ulster and cap, driving the miniature four-in-hand of ponies, that might have been Cinderella's in her fairy days, with the silvery bells and dogs barking round, until you finally give up all comparisons, and discover what England found out long ago, that the "fairest of daughters" is Alexandra of Denmark, Princess of Wales.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

THE autumn and winter of 1872 will long be remembered as the time when the Angel of Death hovered over the Royal House, and the Heir to the Throne lingered for weeks on the Borderland with but little hope of recovery.

The tumult of anxiety that it aroused throughout the British Empire, was in remarkable contrast to the silence and stillness that prevailed around the centre of all hopes and fears at Sandringham. We heard of the excitement from without like the surging of the sea in the distance, but those who lived near or came from afar to hear the latest news were awed and hushed with the solemnity of all around, and walked or drove with measured steps. Even the very wheels seemed to have a muffled sound, as if they feared to disturb him, while old family friends, who could not keep away, hovered about like troubled spirits.

And the weeks went by until the time came

when we hardly dare ask for news, or look to see if the flag were still flying from the tower of Sandringham Church. When the fever began to abate hope rose again; but a second cycle of fever followed, and we knew that little short of a miracle could save him. Only one chance remained: "If the Prince could but sleep, all might yet be well," and a day and a night passed, and yet another, and no sleep came. A low delirium then set in, and the end could not be far off. As the solemn stillness increased we were almost afraid to speak, as if the sound might be carried to the chamber of Death. Once the Royal Wife and Mother and Sisters came out for a short time, by the physicians' request, and paced up and down in silent agony; and people lingered about the roads not asking now how the Prince was,—it seemed too late for that. We were so certain that the anniversary of the Prince Consort's death would bring a change for the better or worse, and it was the eve of the fatal 14th, when the worst had come.

We could not send up the last thing that night, as usual, and in the morning the good news arrived,—the Prince had slept, and there was every hope that his life would be spared. Day by day the improvement continued, and the bulletins and private accounts were indeed a

contrast to the anxiety that preceded them, while the Princess was soon able to drive him out in the little pony-carriage, graciously stopping to be congratulated on the roads.

We had no share and took but little interest in the great Thanksgiving at St Paul's: the connection with the Royal Family at Sandringham is almost a private one, and quite apart from their public position and imperial duties and honours; but we had a little occasion of our own before they left, the clergy and others on the estate assembling to present an address and memorial to the Princess, who had not quite got over the long strain and anxiety, and broke down in the speech she made in return; and Mr Onslow nearly did the same, and I think we all felt—I do not know exactly how. Afterwards they returned to London, and like other great events it rolled back into history, though perhaps it will not be forgotten in years to come, how one touch of nature made all England kin.

CHAPTER XIV.

LIVE STOCK DEPARTMENT.

I HAVE wandered a long way from the farm, where my aspiration for cattle-show honours began to be realised after years of preparation, as I could not give fancy prices for any particular strain, and was obliged to go to work in the least expensive way. I should have liked to embark in Short-horns, like the celebrated Lady Pigott; but if she could afford to have a cow of £3000 on her mind I could not, and had to content myself with the breed of the County, the Norfolk Polls, which are very handsome and a splendid blood-red colour, the darker the better. My great rival at the shows was a well-known Norwich manufacturer, who could buy up anything he liked; and I almost despaired getting beyond a second prize, until one winter at the Smithfield Club Show, Agricultural Hall, the hour of triumph came with a decided first taken by a little beauty, who had been honoured with a Royal Godmother, H.R.H. the Princess Louise of Wales having chosen her name

for the exhibition entry. My prize herd was not large but of good "quality," and this was particularly remarked upon in the report of a heifer I was allowed to present to the Princess Louise, which was afterwards exhibited in her own name and carried off a first prize, and ran very close for a champion.

If you get a first prize it ought to pay expenses, besides giving you a good name in the agricultural world ; but only the initiated would believe the petting up and handling they require from the first. You pick out the most promising calves, likely to grow into good looks, which a breeder's eye soon detects. They must not go back for a day, or lose the "bloom," or be kept too hot, or too cold ; while the appetite and digestion is carefully studied and pampered. This goes on for two or three years, exhibiting them meanwhile in graduated classes, for which they have to be gentled and broken in like colts, or they would not be led out with proper dignity before the judges ; and the finishing touches, up to the last moment—but I will not betray the secrets of my trade, and relate how those exquisite coats are doctored up : dressing a girl for a ball is not half the time and trouble. A prize makes up for everything when the awful moment is over, after

your fate has been trembling in the balance, perhaps the judges differing and an umpire called in; and the rosette is tied on, and the congratulations come pouring in, and you take your friends to see it, and hear the admiring remarks of the crowd. You can tell by the herdsmen's faces which are the prize winners without looking at the cards. They maintain an air of stolid satisfaction during the show, fetching and administering the food and water in a dominant manner; but I was always sorry for the non-successful ones and their masters, knowing the disappointment it is after all the trouble, though they sometimes consoled themselves with the certainty that the judges had made a mistake, and perhaps the best did not always win.

The cattle shows were my field days, particularly the London ones, where you have the opportunity of professional discussions with agriculturists from all parts of the world, and afternoon teas with your private friends on the straw in your own compartment; but a week is too long for the animals, the herdsmen, and yourself, and if you have brought the yardman up you are in a fidget to send him back again. It is like taking the nurse away and leaving the children at home with the nursery-maid. I

also took prizes for cart horses, but I generally sold the very promising ones, thus avoiding a possible future of spavins and sprains and other ills that horse-flesh is heir to; if you refuse a good price, something is sure to happen soon afterwards. I had thought of thoroughbreds at one time, but my old neighbour warning me, "that if I went into that line I should not want no executors" (a Norfolk way of explaining that you will have nothing to leave), frightened me out of it. What a delight it would be to be able to farm regardless of expense and insensible to profit or loss! Anyone can farm if they have the money, but the difficulty is to make it pay.

Sheep take too much time for exhibitions, and the ewe-flock being so very valuable, it is better not to take the shepherd's attention from it; so you must either do the wool barbering and clipping for the shows yourself, or employ a man on purpose, which does not pay, unless you get a great reputation and sell at fancy prices. Lord Walsingham's Southdowns must have been a great financial success.

Pigs are very satisfactory animals and take such a short time to improve upon. The aboriginal Norfolks are hideous brutes, and "eat their heads off." The first ancient maternity

that I put up to fat consumed what Trundle called such a “sight o’ vittles,” that I sold her without a character, and took no risks to the next dealer that came round. Perhaps her enormous appetite may have been noised abroad, or she may have had a voracious look, for he came back to complain that he had stood by her all day in Lynn market without a customer, and now he had brought her home, “she were fit for to break him up.” It is a well-known trick for dealers to declare they have lost by what they buy of you and want something back, but you mustn’t pay any attention to it. It may have been a real wolf this time, but I told him he could afford to keep it a great deal better than I could, so I had no mercy; but no doubt he sold it at a good profit at last. It is wonderful what they buy. They turn everything into money, beginning with old bones and scraps of rubbish from a farm, then into the higher branches, and get quite rich at last.

My breed of “Improved Norfolks” were little beauties, round balls with no noses to speak of, “fit for a parlour,” as the dealers said; and besides orders from different parts of the kingdom, I had the honour of selling them to the Royal Farms of England, Denmark and Greece, the Prince taking out the latter con-

signment in the *Serapis*, and leaving it at Athens on his way to India, so I was well represented in the Royal retinue! An ancient Norfolk cowman took charge of it on the voyage with some other stock destined for King George, and though his wife was very "onesay" at his crossing the ocean, he was quite impervious to fate, and also took the honour as if it had been the habit and custom of his life to assist in Royal progresses. "He wouldn't a liked to a lived in them parts, but liked hisself very well there, and His Majesty were a very pleasant gentleman and uncommon pleased wi' the pig." It is rumoured, though I will not vouch for the truth of it—I will only stand sponsor for the above remarks made to myself, that he said,— "He and the King o' Greece were quite one;" and that on his return from Athens, the King of Denmark, who was staying with the Princess at Sandringham, went up to the Royal farm and asked him how he left His Majesty. Now if one king had asked me after another king, I should have felt rather confused for an answer, but our friend was more than equal to the occasion. "He's quite well, thank yer, sir; he ask after yer all, and he send his love to yer all, and he's quite well, thank yer." "Yer all" being the Princess of Wales and her children,

and the Royal Family of Denmark, was a lovely way of classifying them.

The wide-spreading epidemics are the principal drawback to success in stock-raising, and the cattle plague, the most fatal and mysterious of all. In our neighbourhood it took a line in a certain direction, mowing down its victims in its course, leaving one homestead desolate and another untouched ; then came back again and picked up those omitted in the former visitation. Precautions seemed useless. I shut up the cows in airy sheds ; used constant disinfectants ; gave them preventive doses of homœopathic arsenic, and lighted pitch fires in the field, allowing no one but the yardman and myself to go in ; and when the next farm was decimated and the poor brutes shot and buried and the disease passed on to another, leaving me intact, I began to breathe again. It travelled northward, taking the Prince's herd on the way, and then my turn came. I had not relaxed a single precaution, and was so confident the disease could not penetrate the carbolised atmosphere, that when a cow began to stream from the eyes (the first symptom), I was unwilling to send for the veterinary for fear he should bring the infection, hoping it was only a cold. "She's got it sure enough," when I summoned him at last, sounded

to me like a death-knell. You were allowed to try and cure them then; the pole-axe all round was a later edict; and an awful time "me and Trundle" had with her poor thing! It reminded me of the description of the old plague of London, turning blue and shivering and ulceration and the fearful odour; even Trundle, who minded nothing in a general way, asked me rather anxiously if I thought it were "catchin' to human bein's." We were obliged to have her shot and buried in quicklime, and then waited in fear and trembling, expecting to lose every head of stock on the place. The cow that had stood next to her, though I saw her put her head through the partition and the tears from her eyes stream over it, kept perfectly well, and one some distance off was our next patient; but by that time chloroform had been discovered as a remedy, and we applied it at once. It had the most powerful effect, reducing the plague to an intermittent form, that returned with fever and shiverings at six, twelve, and eighteen hours, but always had something to do with the number six, or its multiplicatives, and the distressing and offensive symptoms were absent. We applied it whenever we thought it necessary, and kept her warm with plenty of gruel and stimulants, and she was in a fair way of recovery when a neighbouring landowner of

great experience, who had invited the London physician, the inventor of the chloroform cure, to stay with him, brought him over to see if they could do anything for me, and were very interested to find the experiment had been so far successful. It was a fine sunshiny day, and they advised her being turned out for a little while for fresh air and exercise. The nurse is sometimes a better judge than the doctor, and though the sun was warm, the wind was a little sharper than I liked, but I thought they ought to know best, and let her out; but whether it was from that cause or not, she certainly got a chill somehow, a relapse set in, and it was all over with her. However, I could not complain, for the plague ended, and I soon had a clean bill of health, and wished my neighbours had been as fortunate. Stamping out is, I believe, necessary, and the only safe course; but in the case of a valuable pedigree herd that would be a national loss, the chloroform experiment might be permitted, its antiseptic properties making it doubly valuable and the disease less infectious. I heard of its being efficacious in several cases and highly thought of by competent authorities.

Pleura-pneumonia is decidedly curable, and the pole-axe seems a stringent alternative. I have an old receipt which is almost infallible, and have

tried it with success. Foot-and-mouth disease is not of much consequence in store stock ; a few doses of salts and external bathings of diluted carbolic acid soon sets all but the very virulent cases to rights ; but among fattening and breeding animals I would almost have the pleura. Fat bullocks shrink away in no time, cows may be permanently injured, and the ewe-flock suffers more than all, the poison remaining in the blood and infecting the lambs, and it is impossible to know when they are free from the taint. The summer fever among the lambs makes up the list of our modern contingencies, for the liver-rot being non-infectious, and of ancient descent, cannot be included in the category.

Various causes are assigned for this marked increase of epidemic diseases. Old-fashioned farmers say it is from the land being unhealthy from the use of artificial manures, and also blame the railway travelling, early forcing, and consignments of foreign stock. I believe all these reasons to be true ; but as we cannot go back to the former systems, all we can do is to counteract the evils of the present so far as is practicable. I should be glad if all foreign live stock were excluded, and so spared the miseries of the voyage ; but the diseases imported years ago have now become naturalised in England, and

would probably break out from time to time even were the strictest isolation maintained, though of course an infected cargo increases the ratio, in the same way that a crew of small-pox patients landed on the coast would communicate the disease, or add to it if existing.

The Government restrictions, though necessary, are almost as harassing as the complaint; and if public roads run through your farm, the difficulty of shifting stock with any suspicion about them is distracting. Some store stock were attacked with pleura on Wolferton marsh, and kept in quarantine until they died from exposure to the wet and cold. At last I could stand it no longer, and brought back a sufferer in a waggon in defiance of the British constitution, and with warmth and nursing it quite recovered. We must remember that the high price of fat stock helps to recoup breeders for these losses; though in Norfolk, where you have to buy in store cattle on account of the scarcity of grass lands, the prices you give discount what you get in selling out again. An old woman, who had been "kitchen housekeeper," related to the end of her days how she had bought a good keow (cow) for her master for "tree pun tree," and milked and took charge of it herself. You can no more buy a cow for £3, 3s. now

than you can find a woman to take charge of it. All farm produce, excepting wheat and other cereals, has risen enormously ; but expenses having risen in greater proportion, the balance sheet is none the better for it, and in time present I am afraid very much the worse, while it is useless to speculate upon the future, for no one can suggest or devise any permanent remedy. It seems as if the land would never again carry the three classes as before ; and that as the labourer is indispensable, the landlord must either submit to a continuous reduction of income, or take a great deal of land into his own hands, farming on an expensive scale with steam machinery, and trying if possible to secure both wholesale, retail, and middleman's profits ; though where the business talents are to be found necessary for such an enterprise, and who is to supply the capital, is at present beyond our calculations.

CHAPTER XV.

SOCIAL CONVULSIONS.

CATTLE diseases, however trying they might be, paled before the great Trades Union and Strike campaign. Plagues and murrain were visitations of Providence ; and though it might seem sometimes, as the poor farmer remarked who had his wheat and barley crop “spiled,” and his “missus took,” that “Providence were goin’ too far,” yet being Providence, “you hadn’t no call to speak agen it.” No signs of a Divine origin were visible in the Revolt of the Field which swept like a hurricane across the land, and under pretence of benefiting the labourers, was a communistic attack upon property from beginning to end. If ever there was a manufactured movement, it was this ; the labourers would never have thought of it for themselves, and had to be goaded and excited into action.

It was most delightful sport for the agitators going about from place to place, setting class against class, inciting them to lawless deeds, and

living in unaccustomed luxury out of the Union funds ; but what was fun to them was death to us. Their plans were laid with consummate skill, and at first they had a great success. They began proceedings by persuading the labourers that the land had once been theirs ; that they had been robbed of it by the land-stealers (the landlords), the priests of Baal (the clergy), and the slave-drivers (the farmers) ; and that by striking at critical seasons they would eventually ruin their persecutors, and come into their own again.

Not possessing any deep historical knowledge, this came upon them like a new revelation ; and they were roused with such a frenzy against the supposed plunderers, and the flame was so artfully fanned by their leaders, that it was wonderful more deeds of violence were not committed. All good feeling was at an end ; old kindnesses and liberalities forgotten and ignored, or looked upon as the result of qualms of conscience on our part, given as a faint atonement for the wholesale confiscation of their patrimony.

Up to that time, I had been on very pleasant terms with my men ; I liked them, and I think they liked me. I had to be down upon them rather sharply sometimes, but they do not mind that, rather prefer it for a change. Their great

antipathies are stinginess and injustice, and I hardly think I could be accused of either propensity; perhaps a little of the former would have been more advantageous to my interest. And now, with the exception of the faithful few who always stand by you, and with whom it is a pleasure to go through life in daily intercourse, this was changed to sullen looks and dark insinuations and occasional outbreaks of bitter invectives against their imaginary foes. If it had not been for the serious consequences entailed, it would have been almost comical to hear these Norfolk rustics, who up to that time had only local gossip and interests for their horizon, discoursing glibly of the doctrines of the French Revolution, interspersed with the wildest communism picked up at the last Union meeting.

“When we work for a man, whatever he have or whatever he spend, ain’t it our money?”

“If he have beef for dinner, ain’t we a right to have a share on it?” and so on.

Arguing over the rights of property was a good excuse for wasting time and leaving off in the midst of their work to enlighten me upon the new *régime*. I ventured to remind one eloquent spokesman that his conversation and political views were very interesting, but as it cost me so much an hour to listen to them, I must regret my

inability to afford it any longer, at which even his "mates" were visibly affected, and the orator relapsed into silence.

The oldest labourer on the place, who was quite worn out when he came, and therefore had no claim upon us, and as a matter of business ought to have been cleared off, only those poor old fellows become so attached to the land and their accustomed haunts, and are so unwilling to own that their life's work is done, that we let him and one or two other antediluvians potter about at little odds and ends, and fancy they were earning something: even he talked about a "civil war" when he came up for his Sunday dinner, and scorned at the idea of driving behind a fast trotting donkey that I lent the village people to fetch the doctor, or any particular errand, and wanted to borrow the friskiest horse on the place. It would have been his last drive if he had been allowed to have it, and then I suppose the Union would have said I ought to have found him a groom as well, and laid his death at my door. I daresay he would have "struck" too, only being nearly decrepit by that time, there was only the donkey to strike about. He might have "struck" against his son to some purpose, who came on a visit dressed in broadcloth and watch-chain, with a fat fancy "dawg," sold all his old father's nice furniture, wanted to shove

him into the workhouse, arguing with me that “pauperses was well off,” and then left him on our hands to maintain. But I had him tracked up and made to contribute something. I must, however, admit that from the beginning to the end of the conflict my labourers’ remarks were political, and not personal, which was not the case everywhere ; in some places they took the opportunity of raking up old scores and paying them off. Nor was there any sign of deeply-rooted maliciousness. I felt they had been put up to everything, and that some who disapproved of it had been intimidated into joining. One day when they had been unusually excited they conveyed a sort of apology afterwards, to the effect that they had been a little the “wuss for bare” (beer), nor did they follow the new custom and leave off touching their hats. One man tried it on, looking very sheepish, but I took no notice and he soon got tired of it, and went back to the old habit.

The money loss involved was the most serious part of the business. It had always been a difficult matter to keep the men well up to their work, but now they began to look upon it as a deadly enemy, to dawdle through the day and expect the same pay on Friday night, also to refuse piece-work that had been highly prized before, because that meant payment by results, while the new

plan was to have the smallest possible results, and strike work altogether at critical times; harvest, haysel, and turnip hoeing being the grand opportunities. When the home machinery is at work, the longer it is kept up the better it seems to go, and the afternoon hours are much the most valuable. Sometimes they would walk off at three o'clock, and put me to the expense of getting up the steam the next day to finish off some chaff and cake cutting, for which I would gladly have paid overtime the day before.

They expected the same privileges and perquisites, that made such a valuable addition to their pay, to be continued through all the bad behaviour, and a farmer related with great gusto how "he'd been advisen a man to have notten to do with them agitation chaps.

"'Notten to do with em, maaster? why they be Mooses a come to deliver us out of bondage.'

"Would yer believe it, that very same man come to me next week. 'Maaster,' says he, 'will yer lend me a horse and cart to get my kindlin' eout of the woods?'

"'Noo, noo,' says I, 'yew go to Mooses.'"

I did not hear that he got either his "kindlin'" or horse and cart out of the Union lights, though the Mooses (between whom and the Moses of old there was more contrast than resemblance)

were soon in a position to have horses and carts of their own; and nothing tended to open the eyes of the labourers to the real motives and characters of their leaders more than the rapid way in which they climbed up into prosperity themselves, and left the grand promises to their followers unfulfilled. A skilled labourer, who had the best work and pay given him on that account, was persuaded to strike and leave me just before harvest, and was to have some better place in Lincolnshire. He had been helped a great deal during a previous illness, but that went for nothing now, and he departed, knowing that it would be a serious inconvenience and possible injury to me. A few weeks after I was told he had come back and would I see him, and in he walked looking like a ghost. The grand place was in the heart of the aguish Fens, and being a very wet season he had been working ankle deep in water, had to walk miles to and from his lodging, with no proper food to eat, and to maintain his wife and family in Norfolk as well. All he could say was, "Will yer forgive me and take me back?" and from that day until I left he made his own agreements, and was beguiled into no more traps of that description.

The shepherd's was a still more serious case. He was very clever with the flock and a valuable

able servant in many ways, and his only fault was going off in a drinking bout every now and then ; not a desirable habit in so responsible a post, but he generally chose a convenient time, and when there was nothing so very particular to do, and if I had an inkling of it I kept out of his way ; for when I came across him, I was obliged to give him warning for the sake of appearances. Then Mary, his wife, and her children would come up crying and beg forgiveness, and he was always to go the very next time it happened, and as it always did happen, the same little pantomime had to be gone through again. And so we jogged on for years, until he was bitten with the Union mania, and argued the right of a free-born Briton to get drunk whenever he pleased, and carried out his views in the most outrageous manner. I gave him a fixed time to mend his ways, and if there was no improvement he was really to go, and neither poor Mary's tears nor anything else should make me give in. He went on worse than ever, and then refused to leave, until "the missus carried him off the place herself." That being impossible, I was puzzled what to do next. He got work elsewhere, but persisted it remaining in the shepherd's cottage and hovering about, and as a last resource came up to tell me "he'd

been thinkin' that as I hadn't been a bad missus to him on the whole, and he didn't seem to sue me now, he'd a brother who'd oblige me by coming to live with me, and he'd stop on nigh and look arter him a bit."

"No thank you, shepherd, I have had quite enough of you, and you go off at once," and finding it quite hopeless he departed at last, wandering from place to place, until I noticed him, in a local paper, figuring at the Petty Sessions for assaulting his master, who requested the Bench to be lenient, and I suppose it was the old tale of Mary and the children coming up for mercy. I had put part of his wages in the bank every year that he might not fool them away at the public house, and when he left I think I paid him out about £80. His new friends did not take this trouble to save it up for him, rather helped him to spend it; and I heard of his buying a pony for £20 that dropped down dead a short time afterwards; then he wanted Mr Onslow to draw up a petition to take about the country, with the Prince and Princess at the head of the subscriptions.

These were only some among many instances I could relate of the evil results of the Trades Union; and those who like myself were known to be opposed to it were in greater danger than

they were aware of at the time. In consequence of some friendly warnings that had been conveyed to me, I slept for some weeks with a revolver in my room, and took it with me sometimes when obliged to be late in the evening, and let everyone know I should use it pretty freely if attacked ; and a farmer near having two policeman on guard one night, it could not have been an unnecessary precaution. I preferred the revolver ; it wanted neither beef nor beer, and couldn't make love to both the maids at once.

I hardly think my own men would have done me any harm, but there were some queer characters about, and an unfortunate farmer's daughter was dragged, out of revenge to her father, into the woods one evening and terribly maltreated. Had the man been acquitted, or escaped with a slight punishment, I am convinced that no woman connected either with landlords or farmers would have been able to go about in safety again ; but a no-nonsense sort of judge being on circuit, a sentence of penal servitude and a flogging taught the salutary lesson that these nefarious plots could not override the law of the land, and stopped it at once.

In course of time the movement began to

decline, and would not have lasted so long if the "Public" had not rushed into the fray, and without inquiring into the truth, or listening to *ex parte* statements, subscribed liberally to the Union funds, thereby prolonging and embittering the strife, and adding immensely to our difficulties and losses. Birmingham, of all places the most ignorant of country life and conditions, was particularly vociferous and meddling, and I wonder what the manufacturer, who undertook to set us all to rights, would have said if we had made an irruption into his territory and interfered between him and his work-people. Neither had we particular cause to bless the "Press" for the part they took against us, publishing sensational accounts in a sort of Bulgarian-atrocity style, and holding us up to pretty general condemnation throughout the kingdom. I can never see that we are under those tremendous obligations to the newspapers that is sometimes impressed upon us, and conclude they do not write for our benefit but for their own, and with a strictly commercial view to profit and loss, while the real or assumed gullibility of some of the reporters is extraordinary ; they do not seem to have a notion that the labourers enjoy nothing more than misleading the "chaps that come about askin' questions."

The “Times” correspondent, after doing at last what he ought to have done at first—making a thorough investigation into facts, examining the labour books of the principal employers, and contrasting the many advantages the country labourer has over the town artisan—made a tardy recantation in our favour, and acknowledged that he found the “starving, down-trodden peasantry” living in comparative comfort, in rude health and strength, and a rough plenty in the cupboard; and the same journal has since deprecated in strong terms the general character of these Union delegates, secretaries, and spokesmen, representing them as a “specious description of parasites, by whom working men have the misfortune to be infested.”

Wages had been gradually rising before the Union movement, which forced them up to an unnatural point for a time, owing to the absence of organisation among the masters, and the perishable nature of farm produce, it being better to give an extra price for getting in a crop than lose it altogether. A “Strike Insurance Company” would have been the only protection. No stacks nor ricks were burned, because they knew we should be paid for the loss; and should the Unions crop up again, I think it would be found a very effectual remedy.

The sufficiency, or insufficiency, of income is a vexed question with all communities, and no one can decide whether the average wages and extras of the country labourer is more or less than he ought to receive ; but I know that the rise during the last twenty years, with a corresponding decrease in the amount of work done, and the results of the Education Act, have contributed their full share towards the great "depression." I am sure the labourers are neither happier nor better for what are called their improved prospects. The spirit of unrest and discontent has entered into their souls, and having "got on" beyond their dreams of possibility, they imagine it to be a never-ending process, and are always craving for more. In pre-union days there was a great attraction about their homely thrifty ways, true dignity and contentment, and above the vulgarity of being ashamed of looking and dressing like what they were. Now they have their "genteel" aspirations like other folk ; the men no longer have those clean embroidered "slops" for Sunday best, which, like everything washable, are so suited for working people, but waste their money upon tailor-made broadcloth ; and I was almost afraid to offer their wives the presents of lilac prints, formerly highly esteemed for

their "washin'" and wearing properties; they came out in such fashionably-trimmed and befrilled garments, employed dressmakers, and smartened up the children to match, and began to talk about "narves" and other nonsense; took in a local society newspaper, which retailed village scandals not in the choicest terms, and I hear are now beginning to call themselves "ladies and gentlemen." The butcher waylaid me in a towering rage one day, "Never see anythink like the daintiness of the pore" (his father having been in the aristocratic rag and bone line, he was bound to look down upon his neighbours); "here they be refusen of my fat pork as I laid in on purpose for 'em! What the country's comin' to I don't know." So I inferred that even that once coveted luxury was voted "common and unclean."

It may be said that people have a right to spend their money as they like; but I do not think anyone has a right to fritter it away, refuse work, and then in illness and old age or misfortune come upon others to maintain them; for this new sort of pride does not take the form of self-respect and independent maintenance.

The advocates of peasant proprietorship on an extensive scale, and the artificial establishment of the scheme, whether by confiscation or

philanthropy, or upon business principles, seem pre-doomed to failure. The two former methods cannot be accepted as a satisfactory solution; and with respect to the latter, the English labourers' families will never wear the coarse homespun clothes and sabots, or live on *pot au feu* and dark bread, with the ceaseless toil that alone enables the foreign peasantry to make *petite culture* a success. Market gardening excepted, I never in my life knew anyone get a living out of a small holding; the one or two occupiers of that class, whom you find in almost every village, invariably have some other trade in hand. They also expect the landlord and larger farmers to lend them their implements, thresh out their crop, and subscribe towards the loss of every horse, cow, or pig, which is generally granted now, the number is so limited; but, with a universal increase, these obliging and benevolent customs would have to be given up, and they would end in a life of slavery, each man doing the work of two or three labourers for the receipts of one. The present light work of a farm servant with a proper cottage, garden, and quarter of an acre potato plot, at the usual rent of the country round, is not easy to be improved upon, as I fear they would find to their cost, if any of these revolutionary

schemes were carried out by their supposed benefactors.

There is great speculation afloat as to what use the labourer will make of his "wote." At the time of the Union excitement, I believe the agitators would have been returned in troops, but no one can tell what they will do now.¹ Jealousy may prevent them from sending one of themselves to "Paarliment." "We ain't goin' to have the likes o' him there." I do not fancy strangers will be acceptable, for a labourer, being asked if he should be for Gladstone, answered indignantly that he "never heerd on him." Perhaps they may go the way of some of the old electors who were either "blue or yaller," and "who'd allays woted for So-and-So, and allays would," and though So-and-So might have changed his politics over and over again, it made no difference. A countryman has been known to give his vote for a member who had been dead some time, and, thinking the expostulations at the polling-booth were the wiles of a political adversary, refused to give any other name.

English life in all its branches is changing so rapidly, that it is impossible to be guided by former standards in anything. It would be folly

¹ A labour Trades Union candidate has since been returned, but unseated shortly afterwards.

to argue that all changes are for the worse, but there is such a thing as going too fast and changing for changing's sake. There seems to be "never no peace" now, everything poked up all round, and inspectors of various sorts "allays on the tramp" at the ratepayers' expense; the "Educationists" muddling up brains, and incessantly running after some new thing; the "Sanataries" routing up smells and nuisances that no one ever smelt or complained of before. An old man was summoned about a pond that they declared "emitted an offensive odour." They were deaf to his argument that he "were born agen it, and lived agen it in the best of health, and now he were gettin' on for eighty; and his mother afore him, she lived nigh that pond, and were ninety-tew when she died."

The last race of Squires had gone to their rest, mercifully taken from the evil to come, before these innovations, or it would have driven them to desperation. It is the fashion now to run down the Sir Roger de Coverleys; but it might be as well if their detractors did as much good in time present as they did in the past, and acquired some of the truth and honour for which they were conspicuous, which is becoming so scarce, and "going to be scarcer." They had their faults, who has not? but they were invaluable members

of the fraternity, dispensing a rough sort of justice, oppressing no man, liberal and hospitable, and the labourer's best friend, protecting him from any inclination to tyranny on the part of his employers, and making him welcome to "bite and sup" in the Hall kitchen. There always has been, and still is, more affinity between the Squires and the labourers, than between labourers and farmers, who, having generally risen from the ranks, may be apt to look down upon the "base steps;" whilst the labourer cannot forgive one of themselves for having risen above them, and will tell you with some bitterness how such a one "come by his money." "Why, his faather work along wi' my faather, and then one day he buy a pig and didn't pay for it, and sold it for more than he say he'd give for it, and then he get on and spekolate, and neow he wouldn't touch a thing arter a poor man, and they du say his wife never goos nigh the dairy and kitchen, and the waste in that house 'ud keep a whole family out on't." That never going "nigh the dairy and kitchen" is sometimes a sore point with the landlords also, who naturally think it unreasonable to be asked for a reduction of rent, when so much might be made in the one department and saved in the other.

The raid that has set in upon landed property

in contradistinction to all other possessions is one of the anomalies of time present. I should have thought it belonged to whoever had bought and paid for it, and that if it is to revert to its very original owners, we should have to dig up the ancient Briton. I suspect there is a good deal of the Judas in this clamour for confiscation for the benefit of the "People;" and when the land is once swept into the bag, I wonder how much will fall to the People's" share? A smothered jealousy towards ancient descent is at the bottom of a great deal. We hear that pedigree is going out of fashion, but the first thing that people do when they have scraped a pile of money together is to rummage one up, very few having the courage to announce, like a celebrated wit, "that he began to inquire into his ancestry, but finding that a grandfather had disappeared about the time of the assizes, thought it better not to proceed any further." Living among the animal creation inspires you with a certain belief in pedigree and race, though it is far more strongly developed in the brute than the human species, where weeding out and the survival of the fittest cannot be maintained. True religion and Christianity are also powerful levellers, enabling everyone to become gentlewomen, and gentlemen in the best sense of the word.

The Church has undergone the same transformation as other institutions. I cannot remember the days of pluralities of livings, the parson riding from parish to parish and going through services, weddings, and christenings in hot haste, no time for long words. "Name this child." "Anna Maria, please sir." "Ann, I baptise thee," and so on ; or the clerk giving out, "there couldn't be na sarmon cause the parson's guse (goose) were sitten on her nest in the pulpit and wouldn't be off this three Sundays." But some of the jovial dining-out sort are quite within my recollection, in the style of the rich incumbent in the Fens, who leaving a well-paid curate and plenty of port wine for the ague-stricken parishioners, be-took himself to some congenial hunting quarters, and in answer to the Bishop's remonstrance, assured his Lordship that the Devil himself couldn't get about the Fens in the winter, so the Parson wasn't wanted there. I have had many a day's hunting in former times with the "Jack Russell" of our parts and his game little private pack, where the pleasure of circumventing the Bishop added to the enjoyment.

Our modern Reverends have hard-working, self-denying men in their ranks, doing a very good work, though it might be well for them to bear in mind, that a too lofty and exclusive standard is

not adapted to the every-day life of mankind, and that stiffness and the unapproachable should always be avoided by those who wish to reach the human heart. The old divines at least possessed the merit of winning the personal attachment of their parishioners, and with their cherry jokes, kitchen physic, and congenial pursuits, made them feel at their ease, and were spoken of as "real gentlemen," the greatest compliment that could be bestowed.

Methodism appears to be on the increase in the villages, and you cannot wonder they should like to relate their conversions, indulge in personalities, and enjoy all the privileges of free trade in religion. Not that I "hold" with the Methodists, for without prejudice towards any form or creed, and glad to welcome goodness wherever it may be found, there are certainly grounds for the oft-expressed opinion, that there is a "depth" about them the uninitiated cannot fathom, and that their love of money is an overruling besetment. The Wesleyan does not seem to be the favourite sect. The service is too quiet and formal, more resembling the ultra-Evangelical school of our Church to be acceptable in village society, but finds greater favour in the neighbouring town. The Ranters are the rural delight, and so racy and lively are their discourses, that whilst our children have to be

made to go to Church, and any excuse presented to stay away, a labourer's child will cry to go to the meetings. I should like to have heard some of the shining lights myself, only it would not have done, and would have offended the clergy. But I really do want to find out how they manage to send the girls into fits and hysterics, and get up all the hand-clapping and shouting. Some of the Ranters' similes and discourses, and also the Salvationists, whom they greatly resemble, have been reported to me from time to time, and have at least the merit of being easy to be understood.

On Contentment, for instance.

“Here, my friends, be the quality—a given fourteen pence a pound for lamb, and yew come here and get the Lamb of God for nothen’.”

On Strife.

“They was all a quarrelen’; one says I’m for Paul, another says I ain’t, I’m for Cephas, and another for summon else. Paul, he hears on it, and down he comes and sune squares ‘em all up. ‘You don’t belong to me,’ says he, ‘you don’t belong to Cephas; you don’t belong to none on us, only to the Lord.’”

On Disobedience.

“After the Lord had made Adam and Eve out of the clay, he put ‘em in a garden for to

dress it and keep it ; and he calls 'em up and says,—'Look you here, Adam and Eve,' says he, 'you've got this here garden for yer very own, to do just what yer like with it ; you may have pears, and plums, and strawberries, and all sorts o' things, and make jam or what yer please, but yer ain't to touch this here tree—*them's* my winter apples,'" followed by a vigorous piece of play-acting, representing the sin and discovery of the culprits, and their ultimate expulsion into the thorns and briars of the wilderness.

Last year, in a distant county, I attended a Whitsuntide feast, where coppers full of scalding tea and kisses-of-peace were going on, quite *à la* Stiggins ; but for the reason above named, my experience of their ministrations has been limited.

I cannot say that these excitements are productive of much practical good ; they appear to be considered a sort of absolution for past offences, and not "go and sin no more," but "free to sin again ;" and the day after one of the great revival meetings, the labourers would be so idle and irritable, that my steward said he dreaded those Mondays more than any other day in the year. After a drinking-bout a man is ashamed of himself ; but spiritual intoxication produces an upstandingness that is more difficult to deal with.

Churches are being renovated and restored all over the country, and though complaints have been made of Vandalism here and there, the relics of past times have been generally respected and preserved, whilst the new custom of harvest and other festival decoration appear to be generally appreciated; though you miss some of the ancient landmarks—the comfortable high chancel pews, the carved benches in the aisle, with the men ranged on one side, the women on the other, and the Parish Clerk, with his vigorous responses and A-Amens, varied by raids on the school-children, and the triumphant confiscation of apples, and other surreptitious devices for beguiling the tedium of the discourse.

In moral and spiritual results the Church unquestionably bears the palm. There are black sheep everywhere, and whilst no one is better than a good clergyman, no one is worse than a bad one; but on the whole they could ill be spared from among us, and whatever changes may take place in large cities and towns, let us hope it will be long before "Disestablishment" finds its way into country districts; where, if the Church of England be thrust aside, there is no sect or creed by which it can worthily be replaced.

CHAPTER XVI.

LAST DAYS.

IN the autumn of 18— I lost my friend at the Rectory. His health had been failing for some time, and now the end had come. He had only been twelve years in his post at Sandringham, the greater part of his life having been spent in the navy, to which profession he was devotedly attached, and to the last there was far more of the “Salt” than the “Parson” about him. It was a trying change from cheerful naval society, and cruises to all parts of the world, to the tedium of a country Rectory, and the anxieties incidental to his Court duties and appointment. Without possessing any of the diplomacy and conventionality that we are apt to associate with a man of the world, he conveyed the unmistakable impression of experiences of life amongst leading personages both at home and abroad, reminding you of those courteous polished French *Abbés* of the *ancien régime*; whilst his simplicity

unselfishness and kind-heartedness—all that the 13th chapter of Corinthians tells us we ought to be, but are not—had passed unscathed through many an ordeal.

His services to the Royal family were so absolutely disinterested, that I believe him to have been a loser by them; whilst the position his family had held for centuries made the honour no new thing among them; and had it been otherwise, he would have been equally insensible to it. The loss to me was irreparable; I felt that my doom was sealed, and that I should no longer be able to cope with the difficulties or my position, which would now increase a hundred-fold. Through all the Sandringham courtesies and hospitalities, there was an under-current of mischief-making going on, which I could not trace to the source, and I am afraid I sometimes suspected the wrong person. However cautious I might be, it seemed impossible to escape from it. The Prince was very anxious one year to hire the shooting on an estate with which I had some connection, and was annoyed at not being able to get it. I was not consulted by the owner, or even aware that an offer for it had been made, and wondered what the Prince was looking so black at me about; in fact, he was never quite the same again.

Another game disturbance cropped up soon after. G— had met with a severe gunshot wound that endangered his life, and had been conveyed into the town to be near the doctors, while I, receiving notice that the Prince wished to shoot over my land on a certain day, left him and went back to stop the work and make arrangements for His Royal Highness's convenience. After the severe shock, and being rather worn with the nursing (as the Princess said afterwards, "What *did* you do? Only think your precious boy to be shot! I cannot think what you *did* do!"), my orders were not perhaps quite so peremptory as usual, for at all times it requires superhuman efforts to keep labourers from going off to see the sport—a man got in the way between the drives, and the Prince spied him from the hill.

I would not have had it happen on any account, for I know how trying a thing of that kind is, "enough to make a saint swear;" still, there was no reason why the Prince should anathematise me before everyone, as if I had done it on purpose. Perhaps he was informed that I had, for the worst being made to me of what he had said, the flame no doubt was fanned likewise in the other direction.

Even the Royal children could not be ill with-

out my being dragged into it. There were some water-springs in a wood not far from my house, and orders were given for buildings to be erected for pumping the water up to Sandringham. It was rather inconvenient having contract-work and workmen all about the premises. A new road I had made was cut to pieces by carting bricks for the engine-house, and the Prince being annoyed with the ruts and holes, for once in a way complained to me himself, under the impression that it was *his* road, and that *I* with my usual malignity had destroyed it. I wish he had always named those sort of things to me, for I think he believed me when I answered rather sharply, "It is *my* road, sir, and your Royal Highness's carts cut it all to pieces."

After the works were completed, they were placed in the hands of a competent working-engineer, who had rooms in the water-tower and was responsible for everything.

Down came the land-agent in a grand bustle one morning. "Prince Albert Victor has typhoid, and it's all your doing." I almost worshipped these children, and now to be accused of killing one of them! "Yes, Mr — has reported at Marlborough House that you allowed the farm drainage to poison the water. I was up there

on business and heard him tell the Prince so myself."

The pipes which were in the under-ground trenches must indeed have been made of bad material for such a thing to be possible. I had been so very particular, knowing how nervous they were about water-drainage, and would not even allow a manure heap to be made in the usual place until I had consulted the engineer in charge. Without naming who had told me, I wrote to Mr — (a gentleman about the Court), asking if it were true that he had accused me of causing the young Prince's illness, and received the most emphatic denial. Another unsolved mystery!

That was a serious affair; yet it was wonderful the trumperies there used to be disturbances about in various ways, and though the brunt of them fell upon me, others came in for them every now and then, while some of the incidents were so ludicrous and incredible that I long to relate them, only it would not be fair upon those who are still at their posts. Perhaps I may reproduce them in a little private and confidential edition, when I have scribbled this one off. Even Mr Onslow got into the wars sometimes, tumbling into scrapes with Pickwickian simplicity.

It was no laughing matter in one way, for I instinctively felt that it was the intention to make me appear an intolerable nuisance to His Royal Highness, who detests being bored, and forgets that it is often the talebearers who are in fault, and not the accused, and then advantage would be taken to get rid of me on the first opportunity.

My farming affairs had also long been out of joint in some mysterious way, notably upon the labour question. Considering the extensive acreage that I held, a large proportion of the new model cottages ought to have been allotted to me; but they were not only given in other directions, but some of my men, whose houses had been pulled down, were turned out to live in any holes I could hire from cottage proprietors in the neighbourhood at an extra rent; whilst labourers who had been dismissed for misconduct (and they must have behaved badly indeed for me to turn them off) were given a good house or a good place in the Prince's service, with higher pay and less work than I could afford to do.

I often wondered they stayed with me at all. I was sometimes almost labour-starved, having to send a waggon to bring hands from a distant village and take them back again in the evening.

I ask any one who understands these things, if they could have got on in that way, without either power or control over their work-people!

And now my crops began to be riddled again with game as in former years. But complaining was really of no use, doing more harm than good ; and when some hundreds of pounds worth of damage was done, I obtained, with great difficulty, only £50, the lawyer curtly informing me that the Prince must have his amusements, and that if I did not like it I could go. It was not the amusements that I objected to ; it was that I could not afford to pay for them !

It was on that occasion that I began to suspect who the secret enemy was, for the lawyer, losing his temper and caution, accused me of all sorts of things that had been told him, while the agent who was too far off no nudge him or stop him, betrayed himself by looking ready to sink through the floor with fright and confusion. Mr. Broome afterwards refused to attend the audit-dinner until the charges were withdrawn, which the lawyer did in a courteous message, for he could behave like a gentleman if he chose, and it made no personal difference to him whether I lived at Sandringham or not ; whilst the agent had very strong reasons for wishing me off the place, besides naturally preferring to have people of his

own class on the farms, or whom he had chosen and put in himself, which I believe has been accomplished by this time, so that Sandringham ought not to be the Elysium the newspapers are so fond of describing. It was very stupid of me not to have seen through this before, but it was difficult to credit such duplicity and ingratitude ; for the man had received a good deal of kindness from me in former days, and was indebted to me in many ways. However, I was not the only person taken in, as others can testify ; he was a master in the art of surreptitiously routing anyone who stood in his way, which the power he began to acquire over the Prince gave him the opportunity of exercising, for when Royalty are overruled by those sort of people, they fall completely into their hands.

It was not very pleasant to be hunted down in this way ; as a sportswoman the Prince ought to have allowed me to "die game."

I would have stayed and fought through everything, if the money losses that were forced upon me had not brought me to a standstill. The bank dare no longer continue the advances, and suddenly called in those already made, and every one in business knows what that means.

To avoid a forced sale at ruinous prices, an old friend kindly offered me sufficient capital to

enable me to pay off the bank and start afresh, concluding of course that arrangements would be made at Sandringham, which would give me a fair chance of success. Not one single concession would they make in game, rent, labour or anything that would enable me to accept this offer. They saw their opportunity and were down upon me with "go, go, go," in all directions, with only one check upon the cry, the "Public," and what would they say if the facts came before them? The "Public" were not likely to trouble themselves about me, but lest they should, a most ingenious little programme was arranged for my acceptance. I was to send in my resignation, giving any but the real reason for leaving, saying that I placed my case entirely in the Prince's hands, from whom I might expect the most liberal treatment in return, which I knew would not consist in coin of the realm, but in Royal invitations which I do not want, and in being pitchforked upon people who did not want me. Society women would be asked to take me up on the ground that they must be kind to poor Mrs Cresswell, to oblige the Prince. My boy, when he was old enough, would be shoved into some appointment through undue influence, while the "understrapper" would bustle about in all directions to help in the sale and packing

up, and I to say how good and kind everybody was!

I wanted no charity, only my lawful due, and I did not choose to be poor Mrs Cresswell, at least not in that sense of the word. I would not play their game and whitewash matters over; on the contrary, when asked why I was leaving a place to which I was devoted, I gave the real reason in no measured terms.

The pressure that was put upon me to give in, and the way in which sundry individuals tried to get the credit of bringing me to submission, could only have happened in a Royal neighbourhood! We human beings are alike from century to century, and if the tale could be unfolded, I have no doubt Naboth had to go through similar experiences; that his tragical death was pronounced by his kinsfolk and neighbours to be due to his obstinacy, and that the Royalties of those days had to be propitiated on all sides.

Unceremoniously a young lawyer appeared on the scene one day:—"I have been talking matters over with the Prince's lawyer and I advise you to go."

"Excuse me," I answered, "but have you been appointed the Prince's legal adviser for the district, or under his London solicitor? Who are you acting for?"

“For you!”

“For me! By whose authority?”

He had travelled down from London, had constituted himself my adviser in the matter, evidently intending to manage it in the most comfortable way for my adversaries, and I to pay the little bill!

He left the room with his possible vision of a Lord-Chancellorship considerably lessened, and troubled me no more.

The espionage became more grievous than ever. I could not go a railway journey in peace. After travelling up to London one day, I received an official request “not to blacken the Prince’s character in a railway carriage,” when I had never mentioned his name. I have said plenty since I left the place, but not when residing there. At last the Prince complained of me openly in the hunting field, and strongly suspecting that the agent had something to do with it, he having been so suspiciously civil of late, I thought perhaps if I took him by surprise I might find it out. I drove up early to his house one morning, marched in, and naming what the Prince had said, asked him how he dared go up to His Royal Highness with such an invention. He trembled all over, and in his terror, thinking I knew more than I did, let it all out, and tried to explain away some other tale he had been up with!

If ever a woman longed to be a man with a hunting-whip that woman was myself; and then he should have some cause to complain to his master. Further investigations revealed that he had also reported that I was letting down the land and neglecting the flock—about which he had written me a sympathising letter, some disease having broken out among them, caused, I had reason to believe, by an overflow of water from the Prince's land being turned on to the fields where they were grazing. Even my rooted prejudice against legal proceedings could not hinder me from threatening an action for libel, and I do not know whether those who dissuaded me from it were right or wrong. Some, of course, only thought of obliging H.R.H., but others whom I could trust urged most strongly that, besides the enormous expense, I should not have a chance in a case that reflected on the Prince, and that we probably would come into the witness box on his servant's behalf. I do not think myself he would have taken that line. It was much more likely that a magnificent message would have been sent requesting that no difference might be made on his account—over which the Press and the Public would have gone into loyal ecstasies, and which would have been far more damaging to my cause than active opposition.

And yet how hard it is to be unable to obtain redress of any description, to feel hemmed in all round, and to pass the rest of your life in the embittering remembrance of injustice and wrong-doing!

But now all hope was over, and I must prepare for the worse. It may seem strange that I should care to stay in a place where I had gone through so much; yet the struggle to keep it only endeared it the more, and nothing can affect the home happiness and the thousand other things that make up our daily lives. And was I really to go? I had borne the burden and heat of the day, and though the work was a pleasure, yet it was real work, and a severe mental and physical strain. I had not been cowardly, but fought my way through almost insuperable difficulties. And to be conquered at last!—I that prided myself, perhaps too much so, upon overcoming every obstacle with a determination not to be crushed or defeated!

How often in my exile and wanderings, extending to wild frontier settlements and the prairies and ranches of the Far West, have I tormented myself by thinking that if I had managed differently or done something desperate, I might have got through; and yet I hardly see how I could have contended against

the adverse circumstances that came crowding upon me all at once.

I do not call myself a religious woman (the goody-goody people turn up their eyes and think me past praying for), and I am glad they do, for I am painfully conscious of having "said a great many things that I regret, and done a great many that I deplore." But I had tried to act for the best in the very difficult position in which I was placed, to be true and just in my dealings with my work-people, and teach them the same, and I was sorry they should have the bad example of witnessing the severe punishment that was overtaking me in consequence.

How I lived through the next few months I hardly know; many have committed suicide for much less. I was so rooted to the place, it seemed as if the very fields would miss me and look different when I left; and how I shrank from the future! *Maladie du pays* is no imaginary illness, but a real physical and mental torture; and I—I was to be turned out upon the world, not only deprived of a home of such peculiar and endearing charm, but of my occupation and profession, with its wide-spreading interests and fascination, into an existence which by comparison seemed no better than



penal servitude! Verily there are things far worse than murder ; and to leave you your bare life, after taking away all that makes life worth having, is a far more flagrant breach of the Sixth Commandment.

And yet I was not wholly deserted ; and those who came forward and stood by me then are almost the only people I care to see now. I need hardly say that my Royal Mistress did what she could. She was so good as to say that she liked to have me at Sandringham, that I should not go, and what could be done—and I know she spoke up bravely for me, and was kindness itself when she came to wish me good-bye, driving down in the little pony-carriage with one of her ladies without a servant. I could not escort her to the door as usual and see her drive away for the last time, but she sent word back from the carriage, “Tell her I *am* so sorry for her, so *very* sorry.”

The labourers turned to and worked with a will till the last, trades-unionism and any little grudges being quite forgotten. Their sense of justice was fully roused, and they were earnest in their condemnation of the measure being meted out to me. I am told they still speak of me with kindness and regret, and that if they dare venture to make the request, they would plead

that the woman who has “ sorely suffered ” might go back to dwell among her own people.

There is always some comedy intermingled with tragedy, and the leave-takings of some of that community were very characteristic. One of my agricultural neighbours, as a piece of parting advice, entreated me, “ wherever I went or whatever became of me, to boast I were rewinde by Ryalty (ruined by Royalty). Don’t you forget now, rewinde by Ryalty, that’ll help yer along like.” And another,—“ I wouldn’t go on frettin’ after an ould farm—why, yer’ll be a London lady ! ”

The wife of one of the smaller Sandringham tenants, who was very fond of us, and used to bring G— birthday cakes in his juvenile days, gave me a downright scolding. “ Yew don’t know how to tackle that agent. Why, he treated my husband right shameful, and I went to him and I says, says I, ‘ Yew’ll make a rope here long enough to hang yourself on one of these days.’ He *was* angry, and began to poke away at the fire. ‘ No need for yew ever to poke a fire,’ says I, ‘ it’ll be poked hot enough for yew where yew’ll go one day.’ Now, ma’am, that’s what yew ought to have said.” But though the good lady would not own to it, I suspected in the long run she got the worst of

it for her very plain speaking, but she had her "say," and that was a consolation and a triumph.

The land hardly ever looked in better condition than the last year. The root crops were unusually fine, the steam machinery having enabled me to take advantage of the short spell of fine weather to clean the land before it became unworkable again, when a connoisseur pronounced it to be like a "garden." The premises were kept up in the usual order to the last, even someone belonging to the enemy's camp rather inadvertently remarking, that it was very unusual to see a place left in such a neat state. He might have added, that to be driven out of a place in that state was more unusual still!

A great deal of help was offered me, or the steward and myself could hardly have got through the extra labour involved; for every head of stock had to be so constantly watched for the slightest suspicion of disease. One week there was a fear of "foot and mouth," but it passed off again. If that or any other infection had broken out, I really do not know what I should have done. I could neither have sold nor kept the cattle; and the corn being injured by the wet season, and the machinery so unsaleable (my steam-plough tackle, that was

nearly as good as new, and would have lasted me for years, and had cost hundreds, going for £30), they were my principal dependence. Then just at the time when the advertisements were coming out, the auctioneer sent word he was ill, and it made such a confusion, that I had to take all the preparations for the sale into my own hands.

I felt like some dull stupid machine, whilst my favourites were being knocked down to the hammer, and as if it could not be a reality, though not quite insensible to the consideration received from many assembled from far and near. And I must confess, it went a little against the grain to allow the Prince's health to be proposed at the luncheon ; yet I liked to have the Princess and her children cheered, so could not in courtesy omit His Royal Highness.

When everyone had left, and the purchases consigned to their owners and driven off, the deadly silence that reigned about the place, with the empty stalls and stables, was more, overpowering and oppressive than what had gone before. The worst was not yet over. One more week and some of my household treasures must share the same fate, and be scattered abroad, with all their endearing re-

membrances. I knew if I attempted to settle down anywhere I should detest it—it would never be like home, and that to wander about the world would be the least unbearable alternative, so that part of our things must go, as they could not all be stowed away in some rooms that had been lent me in Lynn, and it was so difficult to choose which we cared for the least. When you can afford to furnish a house from a grand upholsterer regardless of expense, you do not care for it half so much as when every bit of furniture recalls something that has been given you or bought at such a time, and the rooms filled up by degrees.

It had always been, as the Princess said, "such a pretty house," and I could hardly force myself to begin the final dismantling process. The nurseries were the worst part, for everyone who has lost one child, and has only one left, knows how dear a relic becomes. There lay everything they have used and played with, and there my happiest hours had been spent. The poor old nurse completely broke down over it and was never the same again; she would have borne it better had it been an inevitable necessity, but she could not get over the evil-doing. The drawing-room furniture had always stood in the same place where my hus-

band and I had arranged it years before ; and when the huge packing-cases were brought in, and a picture of herself that the Princess had given me, was one of the first to be lowered into them, it looked as if it was going into a grave.

What was not packed up and sent away was sold on the place, the labourers and trades-people from the villages round buying a good deal ; and I preferred their having them for almost nothing than that they should fall into strangers' hands. There may have been a little feeling of *In Memoriam* in some of the purchasers, for upon revisiting the neighbourhood one year, I stopped at a roadside inn not far from the old haunts, and after the process of recognition was over, I was almost dragged into the house, and feasted upon new bread and butter, ham and cake, until I begged for mercy, the news-telling chatter being interspersed with, "To think I should ever see yure face again." In the corner of the room was a mysterious-looking curtain, and with a—"Now what du yew think this is?"—my hostess drew it aside, and disclosed a kitchen plate warmer that she had bought at my sale. It was not a romantic incident, but it made me feel that there was still something left worth living for.

Only a few hours now in the empty house; for excepting the packages to go with me standing drearily in the hall, everything had been sold or sent away.

The servants were to sleep in the village that night; only the nurse was to go with me, and the conveyance that was to take us had been waiting for hours, and it was getting so late we *must* go.

One last look round the dear, dear rooms, a terrible wrench, and out into the darkness.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE END.

MY affairs were not wound up until some time afterwards, and I cannot say I was as sanguine as some of my friends, that though real compensation was impossible, I should receive a liberal money equivalent. All improvements, and the high condition of the land, had been done by consent and request. I was even asked to keep it in good order to the last, and assured I should be amply repaid. It had been estimated that I had raised the saleable value for the Prince to the amount of £10,000; then there were the game losses, and the extra expenses ~~in~~ many ways, also "compensation for disturbance," etc. I should like to know what would have been said had it been an Irish estate, and the commotion that would have been made about it!

The account of the cake, corn, and manure bills for the eighteen years were sent up to a

leading authority on those matters for an opinion on the percentage that should be received upon these items only, and the answer was £2640. That may have been over-valued, but he was a stranger, who had not the slightest interest in the case and only gave his usual deductions. Of one fact I am certain, that had I left the place the wilderness I found it, the Prince would have had to let it rent-free ; therefore I considered I was entitled to heavy compensation.

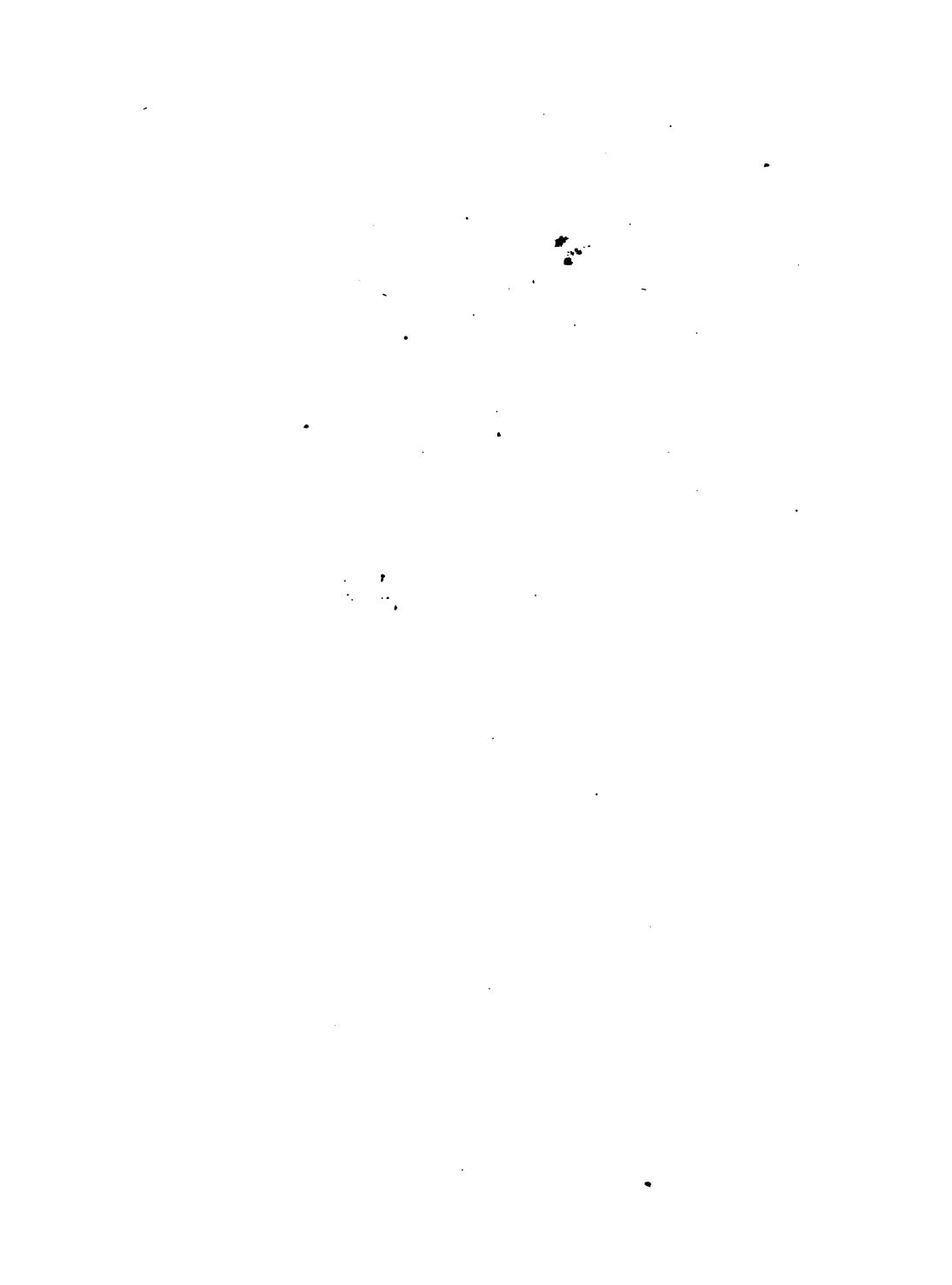
It would take too long to relate how Mr Broome, who prided himself upon never being taken-in upon business matters, declared he was "done" for the first time in his life ; how a few hundreds were all he could get for me, and a few more added on and insultingly called a "present ;" how, without inquiring whether there were any other creditors, the entire hay and turnip crop was taken possession of to make up a balance of rental for the Prince, which was charged up to the "uttermost farthing ;" how a whitewashing document, which I rejected, was signed for me as ~~Co~~-executrix elsewhere ; and how everything that had been refused to me, which would have enabled me to remain in my house, was granted to the new-comer, the hares killed down in cart-loads, new cottages built and other privileges, whilst labourers who offended him were refused

employment at Sandringham, and either turned out of their cottages or starved into submission.

And yet though they had the triumph, and won all along the line, somehow I do not think they will ever feel quite safe and comfortable so long as I am above ground. I hear rumours of anxious inquiries as to whether I am writing a book, and then a hope expressed that the time is passing by, and that perhaps I have given it up!

The Prince heaped numerous favours upon those who had contributed to my expulsion, whilst the "Royal thunderbolts" fell heavily upon some who assisted me. "Put not your trust in princes," but it also adds, "nor in any child of man."

THE END.









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